

# TURCO-ARMENIAN RELATIONS AND BRITISH PROPAGANDA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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*In this paper I intend to trace cursorily the background of the incidents that took place in the Ottoman Empire, mainly in 1915, that caused a great tragedy to the people of Anatolia, especially to the Turks, other Muslims, and Armenians. I also intend to examine that tragedy, its instigators, causes, effects, and how it was exploited by Britain's war-time propagandists, in the light of new documents that have come to my notice during recent studies. I hope that my conclusions may contribute to a better understanding of the Turco-Armenian relations, and of how those amicable relations were disrupted and exploited by external and extremist forces immediately before and during the fateful years of the First World War.*

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Following the upsurge of the Young Turk Movement in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Armenian extremists and revolutionaries, who had been creating havoc in the Ottoman Empire since the early 1880s<sup>1</sup>, joined forces with the Young Turks and helped them in their revolution. In exchange for this help, they hoped that their Turkish comrades-in-revolution would grant the Armenians some kind of geographical autonomy. Hence, after the restoration of the constitution, both of the Armenian extremist organisations, the Hintchak and the Dashnak<sup>2</sup>, promised to give up their revolutionary activities and to cooperate with the Young Turk organisation, the Committee of Union and Progress<sup>3</sup>, to implement the constitution.

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office: Foreign Office documents, hereafter to be referred to as FO - FO 424/104 Confidential 4367; *ibid.* 107/Conf. 4357, 122/Conf. 4562, 132/Conf. 4789, 140/Conf. 4948 f.; see also Salahi R. Sonyel: *The Ottoman Armenians: victims of Great Power diplomacy*, Oxford 1987, pp. 67 f., 87 f., and 109 f.

<sup>2</sup> For the establishment of the Armenian extremist Hintchak and Dashnak societies, see Sonyel: *Ottoman Armenians*, pp. 109 f.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee, or rather Society, of Union and Progress will hereafter be referred to as the CUP; for its establishment, see Sonyel, *ibid.*, pp. 114 and 275 f.

At first the relations between the Young Turks and the Dashnakists were cordial. This is confirmed by Cemal Pasha, who recalls that Maloumian (Aknouni), one of the Armenian leaders he met in Istanbul in 1908, frequently spoke to him of the Russian danger which hang over the Armenians' head. The Hintchakists and the Reformed Hintchakists, however, 'most of whose leaders', according to Cemal Pasha, 'had been bought by the Russians, sought no *rapprochement* with the Turkish committees, and aimed at an Armenian state under Russian protection'. The representatives of these 'Russian committees', who received money from the Russian consulates which 'took an active part in the revolutionary organisations', and even the ecclesiastical party, had begun to declare that the protection of the Tsar was preferable to that of the Caliph, observes Cemal Pasha <sup>4</sup>.

Soon the Dashnakists began to increase their power, especially in the Province of Van. Its chiefs - Aram, Papazian, Sarkis and Ishkhan - were Russian Armenians whose ideas, according to British Vice-Consul Captain Dickson, were those of 'advanced socialism, amounting to anarchy', current among certain classes in the Caucasus who used terrorism as a means of attaining this end. These men, Dickson believed, 'with their upishness and insolence' and their habit of dictating to all and sundry, were not likely, by their leadership, to make the Armenians more popular among the Muslims, under the new regime. The insolent way in which these Dashnak leaders were trying to dictate to the Government, and to Muslim tribal chiefs, with threats to get them punished if their orders were not obeyed, had further irritated all the Muslims. Captain Dickson, too, deplored this attitude of the Armenians. He wrote to British Ambassador Sir Gerard Lowther on 30 September 1908:

*'...The Armenian in subjection, such as I have seen him, is an unsympathetic, mean, cringing, unscrupulous, lying, thieving curd; given his freedom, he loses none of these bad qualities, but in addition becomes insolent, domineering, despotic. He is endowed with a sort of sneak-thief sharpness, which among ignorant people in these parts passes for intelligence'* <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Djemal Pasha: *Memories of a Turkish statesman, 1913-1919*, New York 1973, pp. 249 and 252-3.

<sup>5</sup> FO 371/560/37689: Captain Bertram Dickson to Sir Gerard Lowther, Van dispatch, 30.9.1908.

Armenian extremists were still bringing arms and ammunition surreptitiously into the country, and intriguing with the Russian authorities. Dickson reported that Armenian terrorists called 'fedai' (*fedayi* - self - sacrificing), were coming to Van from Russia and Persia, and many of them were going to those countries from Van.

*'Supposing the new regime continues', declared Dickson, 'then the Turkish Armenians will enjoy an unheard-of liberty, while the Russian Armenians have only a half freedom... Thus Russia will be placed in an awkward predicament with her Caucasian subjects. It appears to me that she may have the choice of two ways of remedying this: she may grant the Caucasus a more liberal constitution, or she may make the Turkish Armenians discontented with the Turks and their new regime by intriguing and stirring up dissension in Turkey. It is too early to say if Russia intends to take either of the two courses, but the fact that the Armenians here are entirely controlled by these Russian "fedai", who have socialistic ideas very unpalatable to the Moslems, may be worth bearing in mind'.*

With these pertinent remarks the British vice-consul on the spot was only prophesying about the plans which Russia was preparing for the Ottoman Empire in order to destabilise its eastern provinces, and this indicates that a handful of Armenian extremist leaders were ready to help Russia put this plan into execution, without giving much thought to its consequences. Yet, despite the economic situation in some parts of the Empire, the restoration of the constitution had greatly ameliorated the position of the Armenians, as confirmed by Vice-Consul Captain Dickson.

The Dashnakists had cooperated with the Young Turks with the hope that, in return, they would obtain some measure of decentralization that would go far to establish one or two 'purely Armenian provinces', but as the regenerated Ottoman Government was aiming at the establishment of a united Ottoman nationality without distinction of race or religion, their disappointment was great. Even Vice-Consul Dickson believed that the aims of the Dashnak Society were 'preposterously ambitious', and that they hoped for the establishment of an Armenian republic, formed out of the portions of Turkish, Russian, and Persian provinces, from which the non-Armenian elements would gradually be excluded. Dickson informed

Lowther that the Armenian clergy were exhorting their flocks to marry young and to beget large families so as to swamp these other elements<sup>6</sup>.

Thus, the Turco-Armenian *rapprochement* proved short-lived<sup>7</sup>. Despite the sensible counsels of the new Armenian Patriarch, Ismirlian, directed to his community, to cooperate loyally with the Turks by showing prudence and moderation, and by abstaining from all extremist ideas, as, he said, the Turkish Government and people were 'frankly and honestly disposed to treat the Armenians fairly'<sup>8</sup>, his advice fell on deaf ears. Since the restoration of the constitution the attitude of the Armenians, according to British Ambassador Lowther, had become 'arrogant and provocative'; whilst the British vice-consul at Van, Captain Bertram Dickson, described them as 'noisy, blatant, overbearing and insolent imitation of the worst type of politician'. 'The Armenian policy is', he reported to Lowther, 'and has been, and probably always will be, an entirely selfish one, with no thoughts of a united Ottoman Empire, but only of their own nationality, if not of their own profit'<sup>9</sup>.

This was confirmed a few years later by Ian M. Smith, the new British vice-consul at Van, who observed that the Armenians were prone to magnify any incident involving themselves. They were also unwilling to serve under the Turkish Government and thus associate themselves with 'the governing race', which they looked down upon as 'less progressive and civilised than themselves'. 'The Armenians resent any attempt to lessen the gulf which divides them from the Turks', reported Smith<sup>10</sup>.

It was the Armenian dream of establishing a greater Armenia that led to the terrible incidents at Adana in April 1909, which, together with the 13 April (*31 Mart*) reaction in the Ottoman capital, supported by the Liberals, contributed to the dethronement of Abdülhamit II. According to

<sup>6</sup> FO 371/762/3123: Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, confidential dispatch, Pera (Beyoğlu) 18.1.1909.

<sup>7</sup> FO 371/553/33230: Lowther to Grey, 20.9.1908; see also Enver Bolayır: *Talât Paşa'nın hatıraları* (memoirs of Talât Pasha), Istanbul 1946, pp. 43 f.

<sup>8</sup> FO 371/557/42608 and FO 371/228: Lowther to Grey, 2.12.1908, transmitting copy of a memorandum by Fitzmaurice, dated 30.11.1908.

<sup>9</sup> FO 371/560/37689: Dickson to Lowther, 29 and 30.9.1908; Lowther to Grey, 24.10.1908.

<sup>10</sup> FO 371/2135/30300: Sir Louis Mallet to Grey, confidential dispatch No. 466, Istanbul 29.6.1914, enclosing copy of a dispatch from Ian M. Smith, vice-consul at Van, No. 13, 10.6.1914.

Major Doughtie-Wylie, the British vice-consul at Mersin<sup>11</sup>, the Dashnak and Hintchak Societies had done much to stir up the Armenians. In particular, the Armenian Bishop Mousheg who, Cemal Pasha believed, was also the leader of the Reformed Hintchakists, 'the incarnation of all the evil instincts', was largely responsible for this<sup>12</sup>. The Turks were alarmed by the incitement of Armenians by Mousheg to arm themselves throughout the country, particularly in Adana and its region. British Ambassador Lowther believed that the Armenian bishop, who had a commercial interest in the sale of firearms, was largely responsible for inflaming the passions of the Armenian people and the fears of the Turks<sup>13</sup>.

After the Adana incidents, in which many Turks and Armenians lost their lives, and which was, as usual, echoed to the Christian West as 'the massacre of Armenians by the Turks', Turco-Armenian relations again became very strained. During the Balkan wars extensive disorders took place all over Anatolia. The political and international situation, and reports from Turkey-in-Europe about the ill-treatment and murder of the Muslims there, added to other reports that the Armenians in the Balkans had formed committees to fight against the Turks, increased the animosity towards them in the outlying provinces of the Empire<sup>14</sup>.

In November 1912 when fortune deserted the Turks, Russian diplomacy, taking advantage of the Balkan war, incited the Ottoman Armenians to give the last blow to the dying 'sick man of Europe'<sup>15</sup>. According to Armenian historian Richard Hovannisian, by 1912, Russian policy towards the Ottoman Armenians had changed.

<sup>11</sup> He lost his life at the Dardanelles and gained the Victoria Cross fighting the Turks whom, in the words of Aubrey Herbert, 'he understood and admired'. Aubrey Herbert: *Ben Kendim - a record of Eastern travel*, London 1924, p. XIV.

<sup>12</sup> Djemal Pasha, p. 258; FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, 4.5.1909, transmitting copies of dispatches from the British vice-consul at Mersin; for the Adana incidents, see S. R. Sonyel: 'The Turco-Armenian (Adana incidents) in the light of secret British documents (July 1908-December 1909)', *Belleter*, LI, No. 201, December 1987, pp. 1290 f.

<sup>13</sup> FO 371/772/17612: Lowther to Grey, confidential dispatch, Pera 4.5.1909.

<sup>14</sup> FO 371/1484/42899: Lowther to Grey, 9.10.1912.

<sup>15</sup> Sonyel: *Ottoman Armenians*, p. 283; Djemal Pasha: *Memories*, pp. 254-62; Esat Uras: *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni meselesi* (Armenians and the Armenian question in history), Ankara 1950, pp. 551-70; Mehmet Hocaoglu: *Tarihte Ermeni mezalimi ve Ermeniler* (Armenian atrocities and the Armenians in history), 1976, pp. 572-3; Abdullah Yaman: *Ermeni meselesi ve Turkiye* (the Armenian question and Turkey), Ankara, n.d., p. 122.

*'There were important reasons in 1912 for satisfying the Armenians. By reviving the Armenian question in Turkey, the Tsar would not only regain the loyalty of his Armenian subjects, but also would strike a blow against possible anarchy in Transcaucasia', declares Hovannisian.*

Hence, Tsar Nicholas II and his advisers were now again prepared 'to resurrect the Armenian question'<sup>16</sup>. This is confirmed by Cemal Pasha, who states that the Russian chargé d'affaires at Istanbul regarded the Armenian plan for reform in Anatolia merely as the first step towards the Russian occupation of eastern Turkey<sup>17</sup>.

Armenian extremist leaders, encouraged by the Ottoman defeats in the Balkans, and the success of the Balkan nationalities in obtaining their independence, judged the time ripe for achieving their own 'liberation'. According to Armenian writers, Louise Nalbandian and Kapriel Serope Papasian, through propaganda, agitation, and terrorism (methods they borrowed from the Russian nihilists and other anarchists), Armenian extremists hoped to start a great insurrectionary movement in the Ottoman Empire, confidently expecting that, when the Empire was aflame, the European Powers would step in and secure to them an autonomous or independent Armenia<sup>18</sup>. In this, they were only copying the Greeks, the Serbs, the Montenegrins, the Bulgars and others who had gained autonomy or independence by organising themselves in secret terrorist societies, by provoking rebellions against the Ottoman Government, and by exterminating the Muslim people.

Yet, in Anatolia, the Armenians did not have the same advantages as the above nationalities: they were scattered throughout the country; nowhere did they constitute a majority of the population; they were divided into hostile sects (Gregorian, Catholic and Protestant); they were disorganised; they lacked administrative capacity; and worst of all, they allowed themselves to be manipulated by the Great Powers, particularly by Britain and Tsarist Russia, who vied with each other to despoil the Ottoman

<sup>16</sup> R. G. Hovannisian: *Armenia on the road to independence, 1918*, Los Angeles 1967, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Djemal Pasha, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>18</sup> Louise Nalbandian: *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, University of California, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1963, pp. 110-111; Kapriel Serope Papasian: *Patriotism Perverted*, Boston 1934, pp. 14-5.

Empire. But the Armenian extremist leaders did not care. They were determined to get what they wanted, and even if they did not succeed, they could try and ruin the Ottoman Empire, without realising that they could, at the same time, ruin their own people<sup>19</sup>.

When, as in the past (e.g. in 1828-9 and 1877-8), Armenian leaders again appealed to Russia for active support against the Sublime Porte<sup>20</sup>, in Turkish eyes the Armenians became the instruments of Russian policy<sup>21</sup>. As a result of Armenian agitation and intrigues with Russia, the situation in Anatolia became so acute that, in April 1913, it was prophesied at the British Foreign Office that the break-up of the Turkish Empire, in Asia as well as in Europe, appeared to be imminent<sup>22</sup>. This was also confirmed by Armenian writer Krikor Behesnilian, in a booklet published in January 1914<sup>23</sup>, in which he observed:

*'The country which once was called Turkey in Europe has been gradually, and of late, speedily, dismembered. The Turk can no longer expect to have an independent position in the Near East. He still holds (only temporarily) a very small territory in Eastern Europe. Constantinople (Istanbul) still remains the Turkish capital. The Turk however must be prepared for further defeat in his ill-gotten domains. The fate of Asiatic Turkey, including Stamboul, is in the balance...'*

Russia was now using both the Armenians and the Kurds to disrupt the Ottoman Empire. The new British vice-consul at Van, Molyneux-Seel, believed that, if, at any time, either Turkey or the Powers seriously contemplated the granting of autonomy to the Armenians, 'Russia would naturally have done all in her power to prevent such an idea being realised'.

<sup>19</sup> S. R. Sonyel: *Armenian terrorism - a menace to the international community*, Cyprus Turkish Association, London 1987, pp. 5-6.

<sup>20</sup> Sublime Porte (*Baialı*) refers to the Ottoman Government as *Quai d'Orsay* refers to the French Government.

<sup>21</sup> Feroz Ahmad: 'Unionist relations with Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914', in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (eds.): *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire - the functioning of a plural society*, Vol. I, *the Central Lands*, New York 1982, pp. 423-4; see also Djemal Pasha, *op. cit.*, pp. 263 f.

<sup>22</sup> FO 371/1783/19793: Lowther to Grey, 26.4.1913, Foreign Office minutes.

<sup>23</sup> FO 371/2130/9911: Krikor Behesnilian: *The truth about the Balkans: the plight of Armenian*, Exeter, January 1914.

An autonomous, or semi-autonomous, Armenian province dividing Turkey from Russia, besides creating discontent among the Russian Armenians, would form a very effective barrier against Russian expansion in that direction, the vice-consul suggested<sup>24</sup>; whilst British Consul B.A. Fontana reported from Aleppo that the Armenians of Dörtyol were all well-armed with modern rifles, every male adult having one in his possession. The consul also revealed that Greeks and others were smuggling rifles into Turkey 'for the Kurds and Armenians to buy'; and that large numbers of arms were hidden, ready for immediate use in an emergency<sup>25</sup>.

The situation was so explosive that, in December 1913, Lady Cavendish wrote to British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, expressing uneasiness about rumours that Russia was likely to annex the eastern provinces of Turkey, which she ignorantly called 'Armenia'. She observed that Noel Buxton had advocated, in the *Nineteenth Century* magazine, the handing over of 'Armenian territory' to Russia, and remarked:

*'I cannot look at that as a right solution of the Armenian terror... I have no faith in the Russian Government. Better for the Armenians to remain as they are, and wait for a better day. If handed over to Russia, the Russian Greek Church would at once compel the Armenians to abandon their Gregorian forms, and adopt those of Russian Greek, and the American Missionaries would be sent out of the country.'*

Grey tried to console her rather hypocritically:

*'I can only say that, our own object is not the dismemberment, but the integrity of the Asiatic possessions of Turkey, and the securing of reforms, especially in Armenia. For this the cooperation of all the Powers interested is essential, and this, we are doing our best to promote and to make effective'*<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> FO 371/1773/35485: Charles M. Marling to Grey, confidential dispatch, Istanbul 25.7.1913, enclosing copy of the vice-consul's dispatch.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., document no. 52128: Sir Louis Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, Istanbul dispatch, 12.11.1913, enclosing copy of the consul's dispatch from Aleppo, 21.10.1913, about his tour of the country.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., doc. no. 56074: Lady Cavendish to Grey, letter, 9.12.1913; Grey to Lady Cavendish, London, 18.12.1913.



Meanwhile, the situation compelled the Ottoman Government to instruct Tevfik Pasha, its ambassador in London, to submit plans for reform in Asiatic Turkey under British officials, and to appeal to the British Government for help. This appeal sparked off a long controversy among the Powers, as Russia opposed it very strongly. All through the summer of 1913 talks were held among the ambassadors of the Powers in Istanbul about the prospective reforms in Anatolia. In these *pourparlers* Russia, assisted by Britain and France (the Triple Entente), posed as the champions of the Armenians, to whom they systematically gave false hopes in order to use them to advance their own interests<sup>27</sup>; whilst Germany and Austria (two members of the Triple Alliance), took the side of the Ottoman Empire.

The result was the imposition on Turkey, on 8 February 1914, of an amended Russian scheme. The CUP Government was forced by Germany to accept this scheme, although it was not willing to put it into force, as it amounted to a partition of Turkey. For the Unionists, with their experience of Macedonian reforms and their consequences, this agreement seemed a prelude to a Russian protectorate over eastern Anatolia. That is precisely how the Russians viewed it. So great was the fear of the CUP of Russian occupation that it considered the Şeyh Sait Molla Selim rebellion in Bitlis (March 1914) as a pretext for such a move - another Adana incident, but this time on Russia's back door<sup>28</sup>.

The reform scheme for Anatolia, though much less comprehensive than the original Russian draft, granted considerable autonomy to the six provinces of eastern Turkey, along with the Province of Trabzon, which were to be consolidated into two administrative sectors. Erzurum, Trabzon, and Sivas would form one sector, and Van, Bitlis, Harput, and Diyarbakır the other. Each sector would be administered by a European inspector-general with wide powers. The inspectors-general would be appointed by the Sultan for a fixed term, but could only be removed with the consent of the Powers.

<sup>27</sup> Vartan Gregorian: 'Book Review', *The Armenian Review*, Boston, vol. 3, no. 4, Winter 1983, p. 77; Dikran Kevoorkyan: 'Armenian terrorism within the framework of international terrorism', in *International Terrorism and the drug connection*, Ankara 1984, pp. 95-6.

<sup>28</sup> See also Djemal Pasha, *op. cit.*, pp. 98 and 271; Ahmad in Braude and Lewis, I, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

In vain did the Ottoman Association in London try to persuade Sir Edward Grey that the Armenian and Chaldean Christians generally desired to remain within the Ottoman Empire, provided that, in addition to full religious liberty already enjoyed, they were guaranteed sound civil administration and real security against violence and ill-usage at the hands of the Kurds. The Association also observed:

*'It seems to be equally clear that deliberate efforts are being made by foreign agents to foment civil discord in Eastern Anatolia and frustrate the sincere endeavours of the present Ottoman Government to establish a just and orderly administration in the Armenian (eastern) provinces'.*

The reaction of the Foreign Office to this appeal was reflected in the following comment by A.C. (Crew or Crow?): 'The names of the signatories (Thomas Barclay, Harold Cox, Aubret Herbert, Walter Guinness, and E.N.Bennett) do not inspire confidence. They are all names associated with political fads or extremes'<sup>29</sup>.

All this time the influence of the Dashnakists was increasing at the expense of the Hintchakists and the Armenagan Ramgavar, owing to the more active and extreme policy they pursued. They were well organised; they had a regular and considerable income from subscriptions; and their agents throughout the Armenian villages in the Province of Van worked for the party, and kept in touch with the central committee in the city of Van. According to the new British vice-consul there, Ian Smith, the Dashnak party had actively and secretly imported arms during the year 1913, and distributed them among its followers.

*'I have seen Armenians openly carrying these arms in the country districts; a good number of inhabitants displayed a familiar knowledge of the different types of rifles and their mechanisms. In Van, it is said that the Armenians are now better armed than the Kurds. They have obtained a number of modern rifles in addition to a few old Martinis, which the Government had distributed to each village',* reported the vice-consul.

The policy of the Dashnakists, he went on, was to put the Armenians in the province in a position to hold their own against the Muslims, should

<sup>29</sup> FO 371/2128/4327: The Ottoman Association to Grey, Lamington letter, 28.1.1914.

the necessity arise. The selling of arms in Van was a very profitable trade—a rifle or pistol being sold for nearly three times its real value, and this made the arming of the villagers a not unattractive business for the Dashnak leaders who had taken it up<sup>30</sup>.

In another dispatch, in January 1914, Smith reported that the Armenians in Van were very optimistic, and believed that, 'numbering as they do about 2/5ths of the population of the province, owing to their superior education and commercial ability', they would, under European control, be able to dominate the Muslim elements of the population. Many Armenians of the intellectual type had been to Russia, America, and elsewhere abroad; considered themselves as Europeans rather than Ottomans, and looked down upon their Turkish fellow citizens.

*'This professional and trading class', went on Smith, 'possibly attracts more attention to its views in Europe than they deserve, and I do not consider that, as regards this vilâyet (province), they properly represent the opinions of the great majority of Armenians who live in their villages and think more of their harvests than of political questions. Apart from... security from raids on the part of Kurds, and theft of their sheep and cattle, (peace) is what the village Armenians chiefly desire...'*<sup>31</sup>

Before the outbreak of the Great War there were four main Armenian parties in Turkey: Dashnaktsutun, Hintchak, Viragazmian Hintchak, and Ramgavar. The first two were described as 'revolutionary, or national socialists', with little difference in their methods of using violence and terrorism to attain their ends, which were autonomy or semi-independence for the Armenians, to begin with, and full independence, ultimately. According to a memorandum drawn up by R. McDonell of the British Foreign Office, the Dashnakists bought arms and ammunition in Russia, and sent them through the Caucasus and Persia to Turkey. They collected men and privately trained them. They planned and carried out every kind of agitation and assassinations, including the murder of wealthy Armenians who refused to contribute to their funds. The policy of the Dash-

<sup>30</sup> FO 371/2130/5748: Mallet to Grey, Istanbul dispatch, 30.1.1914, enclosing copy of report by Smith, Van, 10.1.1914.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Report by Vice-Consul Ian M. Smith, Van, No. 1, 10.1.1914.

nak Party was based on the dictum: 'the end justifies the means'. McDowell describes how, in March 1918, the Baku branch joined the Bolsheviks in order to be revenged on the Muslim Tatars, while the party in eastern Turkey was 'social revolutionist'. When the Bolshevik-Armenian coalition was formed, Shaumian, the Bolshevik commissar (of Armenian origin) was warned that a massacre would result, and replied: 'Would any good Dachnak think twice of a few thousand women and children if he saw the realization of his ideals?'<sup>32</sup>

The Hintchak programme did not differ markedly from that of the Dashnak, but it devoted more attention to Armenian claims for some form of home rule within the Turkish Empire. Both parties had extremists and moderates. While the Hintchak aimed at the formation of an Armenian state under Turkish suzerainty, according to the moderates, independent, according to the extremists; the Dashnak aimed rather at so organising the Armenian population as to make it an indispensable ally of the Young Turks against the conservatism of the Old Turks. The Hintchak wished to reduce the cooperation with the Turks to a minimum; the Dashnak encouraged it, at least, for a time. The Hintchak programme also advocated propaganda, agitation and terror as a means of reaching its objectives. The 'methods' it advocated were reflections of those put forth by the Russian *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will)<sup>33</sup>.

The Viragazmian was a conservative small group of dissidents from the Hintchak who disliked the occult conspiratorial methods of the latter. The Ramgavar was more moderate. It aimed at maintaining the powers and prerogatives of the Armenian Patriarchate until the claims of the Armenians regarding the special status of the six eastern provinces of Turkey were granted, and was strongly opposed to the anti-clerical tendencies of the Dashnakists<sup>34</sup>. All or most of these parties incited the Armenians to arm themselves.

While Armenian insurgency was thus gathering momentum, the Ottoman Government was trying half-heartedly to implement the agreement

<sup>32</sup> FO 371/4974/E 2404: Memorandum by R. McDonell on the 'Armenian Society Dachnacksutun', Foreign Office, 25.3.1920.

<sup>33</sup> Nalbandian, op. cit., p. 114. *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will), the most significant of all the terrorist movements, which operated in Russia between January 1878 and March 1881. It was established by anarchists and nihilists; see Grant Wardlaw: *Political terrorism - theory, tactics and counter-measures*, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> FO 371/3658/47314: Richard Webb to A. J. Balfour, Istanbul dispatch, 27.2.1919.

of 8 February 1914 which it found very painful. But Russian policy was never to permit peace in eastern Anatolia. For this, Russia had first to establish a protectorate over eastern Turkey, further to awaken the sympathy of Europe for the Armenians, and to stir up the Muslim tribal *Beys* and influential sheikhs to resistance against the government and the Armenians. It was in accordance with this carefully planned scheme that the Russian government supported Abdul Razak Bedirhani; furnished him with lavish supplies of money on the pretext of restoring tribal rule at Sinai; and through the agency of its consul at Bitlis, provoked Şeyh Sait Molla to rise against the Government<sup>35</sup>.

When the rebellious Kurds were driven out of Bitlis, some of the ringleaders, including their chief, Şeyh Sait Molla, took refuge in the Russian consulate. On hearing this, Russian Ambassador M. de Giers, very confidentially, expressed his regrets to the new British Ambassador Louis Mallet for 'the admittance of the Kurds to the Russian consulate', as it would encourage the idea that the movement was inspired by Russian agents, but he could not now surrender them. He told Mallet that he would instruct the consul to arrange for their escape<sup>36</sup>. But Şeyh Sait, who was sentenced to death *in absentia*, remained in the Russian consulate until November when Turkey entered the Great War. He was then captured and executed. During the uprising arms were distributed by the Ottoman Government to the Armenians so that they could defend themselves against the Kurds, and this had a good effect on the community<sup>37</sup>.

In May (1914) the Grand Vezir informed Mallet that the Kurds were again in rebellion, encouraged by the Russian consul at Hoy (Khoi). Abdul Razak, the Russian protégé, was arranging a huge Kurdish movement, but the Turkish Government was prepared, and its troops were ready on the spot to check it. Mallet recommended to the Grand Vezir to speak to the Russian ambassador at once, which he duly did. The ambassador ostensibly promised to make an inquiry about the Russian consul involved<sup>38</sup>; but actually did nothing.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the British consul at Erzurum, J. H. Monahan, reported to Ambassador Mallet on 13 June

<sup>35</sup> Djemal Pasha, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-6.

<sup>36</sup> FO 371/2130/15028: Mallet to Grey, Istanbul dispatch, 5.4.1914.

<sup>37</sup> Ahmad in Braude and Lewis, I, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

<sup>38</sup> FO 371/2130/24366: Mallet to Grey, Pera dispatch, 26.5.1914.

that M.Clergé had arrived ten days earlier as second secretary to the Russian consulate-general there. He was generally known to be an officer of the Russian army, though his military rank was suppressed there, as was that of his predecessor, Colonel Wychinsky, who, after five years' service, had left two days earlier to take up an appointment in the intelligence department of the War Office in St. Petersburg. 'The staff of the Consulate-General consists of the Consul-General, a first secretary being a member of the Russian Consular Service, a second that is really military secretary, and three well paid Ottoman Armenian Dragomans of whom one is specially attached to the military secretary for the purpose of military information', reported the British consul<sup>39</sup>.

Meanwhile, the arrival (in May 1914) of the two inspectors-general for eastern Anatolia, Major Hoff, a Norwegian, and M. Westenek, a Dutchman, seemed to be an indication that Armenian dreams were about to be fulfilled, and the Ottoman Empire parcelled out. Perhaps it was a coincidence that, in the first week in May, the Russian paper *Novoe Vremya* published a leading article on Asia Minor and the Triple Alliance, in which it stated that a new claimant in the economic division of Asiatic Turkey had appeared in the person of Austria, a country which had hitherto not been actively interested in the Asiatic continent. This was a reference to Austrian claims for concessions to work the natural wealth of the regions adjoining the southern littoral of Asia Minor - namely the Tekke 'sanjak' (sancak) of the Konya Province, and of the İç İli 'sanjak' of the Adana Province. The paper then referred to the Italian claims, also in the 'sanjak' of Tekke, and expressed the opinion that any friction between Austria and Italy would be adjusted by their powerful ally, Germany, and added that Germany was undoubtedly supporting Austria and Italy in their claims to share 'in the economic division of Asiatic Turkey', and had probably encouraged these two countries to present claims. This would result in all the Powers of the Triple Alliance 'receiving a good share of the Turkish inheritance in Asia Minor'.

The paper then went on as follows:

*'This possibility must not be passed unnoticed by the diplomacy of the Triple Entente, and especially by Russian diplomacy. These claims of*

<sup>39</sup> FO 371/2135/30302: J. H. Monahan to Louis Mallet, Erzurum dispatch, No. 18, 13.6.1914.

*the Triple Alliance to the whole southern littoral of Asia Minor are of such importance to Russia, France and England that it must evoke joint action on their part, and it will be much easier for them to act before the issue of Irades (edicts) by the Sultan granting Italy and Austria the concessions they are seeking than afterwards when it is too late*<sup>40</sup>.

Thus, 'the Armenian reform' scheme was nothing but an excuse for the Great Powers to divide the Ottoman Empire into spheres of economic exploitation. The Turkish Government, however, which dreaded the Russian menace behind the scheme, tried to curtail the authority of the inspectors, and as soon as the Great War broke out, dismissed them<sup>41</sup>.

### THE DECLARATION OF WAR AND ARMENIAN EXTREMISTS

According to evidence which has recently come to light, during the Great War, Armenian extremists, both inside and outside Turkey, were planning a general uprising in Anatolia, particularly in the northeast, near the Russian frontier, and the southeast, in the region known as Cilicia (Çukurova), with a view to facilitating the advance of the Entente armies into Turkey. The British, French, Russian, American, German, Austrian, Italian, Armenian, and Turkish archives, and many publications, abound in evidence to prove this paramount point; in particular, the British Foreign Office archives at the Public Record Office, in London, the Ottoman war documents published by the Strategic Research and Military History Department of the Office of the Turkish Chief of General Staff, and the Prime Minister's archives (*Başbakanlık Arşivi*) in Istanbul provide much evidence<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> FO 371/2134/20880: Sir George W. Buchanan to Grey, St. Petersburg dispatch, No. 133, 5-5-1914.

<sup>41</sup> See Roderic Davison: 'The Armenian crisis, 1912-1914', *American Historical Review*, LIII, April 1948, pp. 481-505; Vahan Papazian: *Im Hushere* (my memoirs), 3 vols., I, Boston 1950, II and III, Beirut 1952, Vol. III, pp. 241-58 and 543-83; Leo (Arakel Babakhani-an): *Hayots hartsi vaveragrere* (documents on the Armenian question), Tiflis 1915, pp. 301-57; Djemal Pasha, op. cit., pp. 274-6.

<sup>42</sup> See FO 371 files Nos. 2130 f., and confidential print; *Documents*, Prime Minister's Office (Başbakanlık Dairesi), Directorate-General of Press and Information, Ankara 1982 (atrocious translation of Turkish documents into English); *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, Ankara 1982, No. 81.

This evidence indicates that, long before the outbreak of the Great War, Armenian extremists, especially in the northeast of Turkey, were intriguing with Tsarist Russia who, since the Treaty of San Stefano (1878), had posed as their champion, and who had never failed to exploit the strained relations between the Armenians and the local Muslim tribes by making full use of land disputes between them. The Russians, at first, incited the Kurds to attack the Armenians in order to make their position precarious in the Ottoman Empire, and to cause them to bring pressure to bear upon the Ottoman Government for Russian intervention in the internal affairs of Turkey. The Russian Consul Cherkov at Hoy (Khoi), we are told by British Ambassador Sir Louis Mallet, was encouraging the Kurdish chiefs to rebel against the Ottoman Government in order to increase Armenian discontent and to diminish Turkish authority<sup>43</sup>.

When, on 1 August 1914, Germany declared war on Russia, Armenian extremists, who sensed and hoped that sooner or later Turkey would be involved, began to intensify their preparations for the conflict. Armenian leaders in the Ottoman Empire adopted two stances towards the war: the Armenian 'establishment' - businessmen, churchmen, and educationalists - pledged individual support to the Ottoman Government, although they adopted neutrality; while Armenian extremist groups stepped up their anti-Ottoman activities, including the stock-piling of arms in eastern Anatolian cities. On the other side, Armenians in the Russian Empire, far from professing neutrality, supported the Tsar, and joined the Russian forces with the intention of occupying the eastern provinces of Turkey, which they labelled 'Armenia', and uniting with their brothers<sup>44</sup>.

On 5 August, two days after the Ottoman Government declared mobilisation, Kevork V, the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, wrote to Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, the Viceroy of the Caucasus, asking him to utilise the favourable moment in order to solve the 'Armenian question'. He suggested that the so-called 'Armenian *Vilâyet*s' of Anatolia should be united into a single province and placed under a Christian governor-general, selected by Russia, and independent of the Sublime Porte; and that a consider-

<sup>43</sup> FO 371/2130/31341: Mallet to Grey, 2.7.1914.

<sup>44</sup> Justin McCarthy: 'Armenian terrorism: history as poison and antidote', in *International Terrorism and the drug connection*, op. cit., pp. 88-9; Hovhannes Kachaznoui: *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnagtsoutiun) has nothing to do any more*, New York 1955, p. 6.



able degree of autonomy should be granted to the Turkish Armenians. If Russia agreed to do this, all the Armenians would unconditionally support the Russian war effort<sup>45</sup>.

Vorontsov-Dashkov replied that the problems which agitated the Armenians would be solved favourably, but warned the Catholicos that the Armenians should act in strict conformity with his (Viceroy's) orders, and if war were to come, Turkey should appear as the aggressor. It would therefore be undesirable, for the time being, to provoke an Armenian rebellion in Turkey. He added, however, that, in the event of war, he would expect the Armenians to carry out his orders. We are told by R. McDonell of the British Foreign Office that it was Vorontsov-Dashkov who, on the outbreak of war, 'made very considerable use of (the Dashnak Society) for secret service purposes in Turkey, and for creating disturbances and opposing the Turks in Asia Minor'<sup>46</sup>.

On receiving the Viceroy's reply, the Catholicos wrote to Tsar Nicholas II that the Armenians hoped for Russian protection. The Tsar replied: 'Tell your flock, Holy Father, that a most brilliant future awaits the Armenians'<sup>47</sup>. But Russia was not really interested in the Armenians; she was prepared to use them as tools in her expansionist policy, and no more. Blinded by their hatred towards the Turks, they did not realise what a tragic part was being prepared for them in the coming war.

As early as September 1914 the Ottoman Government felt the necessity of keeping the Armenians under surveillance<sup>48</sup>. Armenian revolutionary bands had begun to be formed in Transcaucasia, with the help of Dashnakists, 'with great enthusiasm', comments Kachaznoui<sup>49</sup>. Although the Dashnak Party had given assurances to the Turks that, in the event of a war between Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the Armenians would support the latter as loyal citizens, they did not carry out their pro-

<sup>45</sup> V. B. Stankovich: *Sudby narodov Rossii*, Berlin 1921, p. 238; Gr. Tchalkouchian: *Le Livre Rouge*, Paris 1919, p. 12; Uras, op. cit., pp. 583-5; Kâmurân Gürün: *Ermeni Dosyası* (The Armenian File), Ankara 1984, p. 197.

<sup>46</sup> FO 371/4974/E 2404: Memorandum by R. McDonell on 'Armenian Society Dachnacksutiun', Foreign Office, 25.3.1920.

<sup>47</sup> Tchalkouchian, op. cit., pp. 14-5; see also Kachaznoui, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, Ankara 1982, KLS 2818, document No. 59, 2-10 - Ottoman acting Commander-in-Chief to Commander of the Third Army, Istanbul, 6.9.1914.

<sup>49</sup> Kachaznoui, op. cit., p. 5.

mise of loyalty. 'They were swayed in their actions by the interests of the Russian Government; ... even the decision of their own convention at Erzurum was forgotten, and a call was sent for Armenian volunteers to fight the Turks on the Caucasian front. These Armenian volunteer regiments would render valuable service to the Russian Army, in the years 1914 to 1916', relates Papasian<sup>50</sup>.

In the middle of September the Russians, through the Armenians of the Caucasus, were trying to draw to their side the Armenians living in the eastern provinces of Turkey, and to provoke them to revolt. The Armenians were being urged, if the Ottoman Empire entered the war, to revolt, and if conscripted, to desert from the army. They were promised independence on territories to be detached from the Ottoman Empire. The Russians were believed to have sent many men to the Armenian villages, disguised as Turkish peasants, who had brought with them arms and ammunition for wide distribution. The Armenians, however, did not need any Russian encouragement to desert from the Turkish army, as they had already begun to do so in droves, even before mobilisation, and crossing over the border, they joined the Russian army<sup>51</sup>.

Following the Ottoman mobilisation, we are told by Aneurin Williams, the British Armenophil MP, hundreds of Armenians fled to the mountains rather than join the Ottoman army; and 'at least three encounters took place (in September) between Turkish gendarmes and bands of such Armenians in the Province of Van'<sup>52</sup>. In a very interesting dispatch, dated 25 September, British Ambassador Sir Louis Mallet referred to the northeastern provinces of Turkey, and declared: 'Developments in Turkish policy may lead to the renewal of the insurrectionary activities of the non-Turkish races there, and consequently force Russia, sooner or later, to define her policy in regard to a region that marches with certain of the more disturbed portions of her own Empire'.

<sup>50</sup> Papasian, *op. cit.* pp. 37-8.

<sup>51</sup> Acting Governor to Commander of the Third Army, Erzurum dispatch, 14.9.1914; Gürün, *op. cit.*, p. 201; similar report from Mustafa Bey, Governor of Bitlis, dated 18.9.1914; *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, No. 81, December 1982; *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, document No. 1804; secret telegram of the Third Army to all units, Erzurum, 19.9.1914, p. 8, documents Nos. 1-2; *ibid.* document No. 1899 (95): Cemal, Governor of Erzurum, to the Third Army Commander, telegram, 31.10.1914, enclosing coded telegram from Bayezit District Authority, dated 29.10.1914, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> FO 371/2116/51007: Aneurin Williams to Grey, London letter, 18.9.1914.

The ambassador believed that a feeling of 'general pessimism and dissatisfaction prevailed' in the area, which was aggravated by the recent mobilisation. In the Diyarbakir Province certain Kurdish and Armenian villages had refused recruits and contributions. Referring to the 'radical, almost socialistic tendencies' of the Armenian leaders, Mallet observed that the Armenians formed, at most, a third of the total population of the northeastern provinces, but they were organised and armed with rifles', not only in that area, but also in the Adana Province. Their 'relative preparedness' had alarmed the authorities, who, in the Adana Province, had artillery ready to quell resistance, and who, in the Erzurum Province, were arming the local people. The Armenians, however, might 'well respond to a signal for revolution from the Tashnakists, were the moment propitious', remarked Mallet. The Dashnakists had established an ascendancy out of all proportion to their numbers by terrorist methods, and those who refused to be enrolled by them, had their trees cut down and their sheep driven off; they generally suffered, Mallet believed. Many cases had recently been reported by British consular officers.

According to the British ambassador, the ideal of the 'more advanced' Armenians would be an independent Armenian state, freed as far as possible from Russian protection; and that if the Turks were anywhere in difficulties, the Armenians might attempt some movement, with this end in view, independently of assistance from Russia. It was perhaps for this reason that they had not emigrated to Russian territory wholesale. They would probably be joined by many of their compatriots from over the frontier. On the other hand, were the opportunity for a rising to be afforded by a Russian incursion into eastern Anatolia, they would recognise the inevitable and use the Russians, in so far as they could, to their own advantage, treating them as an alternative preferable to their existing rulers. 'Turkish resistance to such an incursion could not count on much help from Armenian elements', remarked Mallet<sup>53</sup>.

Already, Armenian extremists everywhere had begun to prepare for agitation and possible rebellion. Many Armenian propagandists had dispersed all over Anatolia, and had started to agitate against Turkey. Two Russian subjects were expelled from Erzurum in September for having been suspected of exciting disaffection among the Armenian soldiers in

<sup>53</sup> FO 371/2137/59383: Mallet to Grey, Therapia (Tarabya) dispatch No. 607, 25.9.1914.

Turkish service<sup>54</sup>. Numerous circulars and instructions were dispatched to Armenian agitators from Istanbul and abroad, and their distribution was facilitated by the Russian, British, French, and Italian embassies and consulates, which also assisted the Armenian revolutionaries in any way they could. In return, the Armenians undertook to spy for these countries, and to provide them with information which they could not obtain at the time<sup>55</sup>. File 2489 (Foreign Office 371 class) - Public Record Office - is full of documents sent by Alfred Biliotti, the British vice-consul in Rhodes (of Italian origin), about intelligence gathered from various sources, including Turkish, Greek and Armenian agents, on the military activities of the Turks, which information was promptly sent to London, Egypt, and to the commanders of the Dardanelles operations, as early as the latter part of April 1915.

Here are a few examples, from among many, showing Armenian disloyalty to their own country: 1st example. Vahan Cardashian, an Armenian lawyer who served, in the summer of 1915, as high commissioner of Turkey for the San Francisco exhibition, wrote to Lord Robert Cecil, the British ambassador in Washington, on 8 July 1918, claiming that, forty-one days before the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war, he had informed the British Embassy in Washington of its decision to enter the war on the side of Germany, and transmitted to the British ambassador 'the Turkish plan of campaign'<sup>56</sup>.

2nd example: An Armenian named Diran Yachibekian applied to the British Foreign Office on 11 May 1921 from Paris, appealing for assistance, and saying that he was a former employee of the Administration of Posts in Istanbul, and that in that capacity he had rendered precious services to the British Government.

*'When Turkey was still neutral', he explained, 'we had strict orders to keep all the telegrams to the embassies of the Allies. We received many cypher telegraphs for the British Embassy which would have never reached their destination. At the risk of my life, I remitted copies of these telegrams to the British Embassy through M. Nerses*

<sup>54</sup> FO 371/2146/70602: Monahan to Mallet, Erzurum dispatch, 14.10.1914.

<sup>55</sup> İsmet Parmaksızoğlu: *Ermeni Komitelerinin ihtilâl hareketleri ve besledikleri emeller* (revolutionary activities of Armenian committees and their aspirations), Ankara 1981, p. 77.

<sup>56</sup> FO 371/3410/129455: Vahan Cardashian to Lord Robert Cecil, New York letter, 8.7.1918.

*Noradoun gian, the director of the firm Whittall and Company Limited at Constantinople. I kept on then transmitting very precious documents and information as can be proved by the British ambassador at Constantinople. I was very faithful to Britain during the whole period of the war, and devoted, especially during the first critical period of hostilities up to the time Turkey declared war'.*

This was confirmed by Nerses Noradoun gian, an employee of the firm J.W. Whittall and Company Limited at Istanbul, who wrote to Frank Rattigan, the acting British high commissioner, on 26 July 1921, as follows:

*'With reference to the claim put forward by Diran Yachibeghian, who was a Telegraph Office Clerk, for services rendered during the war, I beg to state as follows: Just about the time of the outbreak of the War, this person handed to me for transmission to "qui de droit" copies of all the cypher telegrams addressed to the British, French and Russian Embassies, which had been held up by the Turkish Government. For this work a small payment was made to him at the time by the British Authorities here, amounting, I believe, to 20 Turkish Pounds Gold, to be shared between himself and a friend of his, also a clerk in the Telegraph Office. During the War, he, on several occasions, gave me valuable information obtained from Government telegrams, which I transmitted to my principal. I never paid him anything, because I could not allow him to understand that I was in a position to do so. I accepted the information as from friend to friend'.*

Nevertheless, on 26 November Lancelot Oliphant of the Foreign Office asked Sir Horace Rumbold, the British high commissioner in Istanbul, to inform Yachibekian that the British Government 'do not feel justified in complying with his request for pecuniary assistance'<sup>57</sup>.

3rd example: On 27 Decembre 1914 the British warship HMS *Doris* carried out a raid on İskenderun (Alexandretta), where the railway station was occupied, the telegraph wires were cut, and the instrument was removed. Three Armenian railway officials themselves smashed the electric batteries on the lines 'with particular satisfaction', reported Captain Frank

<sup>57</sup> FO 371/6575/E 5569: Diran Yachibekian to Foreign Office, Paris letter, 11.5.1921; *ibid.*, document No. E 9022: Frank Rattigan to Lord Curzon, Istanbul dispatch, 29.7.1921; *ibid.*, document No. E 12057: Yachibekian to Foreign Office, Istanbul letter, 27.10.1921.

Larken. They then appealed for protection, stating that they would be hanged for the damage done. They were taken on board the ship. One of them could speak French. They were subjected to a searching inquiry, and gave 'useful information' to the enemies of their country<sup>58</sup>.

4th example. On 20 July 1915 the British minister in Sofia, M. O'Beirne, reported to the Foreign Office that the editor of the Armenian paper published in the Bulgarian capital communicated the following information obtained from his agents in Turkey:

*'Turks are now suffering greatly from lack of munitions of war. Their factory at Zeytun Burnu can only turn out 30,000 rounds of small ammunition and 200 shells a day. The limited output is due to some extent to the shortage of coal. Turks are therefore preparing an extensive offensive in Gallipoli in order to gain decisive success before the shortage of munitions of war becomes too pronounced'*<sup>59</sup>.

5th example: In March or April 1916 an explosion took place in the arsenal in Istanbul, killing more than 150, and wounding a few hundred people. It was said that this had happened through a mine exploding by accident; but the truth was that it was the work of an Armenian<sup>60</sup>.

Moreover, on 29 October 1914 the British consul at Batum, P. Stevenson, wrote to the Foreign Office that the Armenian organisations had set up a volunteer corps of about 45,000 men, 'presumably for service in Asia Minor, in conjunction with Russian forces, in the event that military operations against Turkey should be rendered necessary'. Recruits for this corps were concentrated and trained at Alexandropol. The local Armenian newspapers strongly recommended to their coreligionists living in Persia to remain in the country, and to those who had left, to return to their homes with the least possible delay, in order that, when the time came,

<sup>58</sup> FO 371/2483/15633: Admiralty to Foreign Office, dispatch, 9.2.1915, transmitting a report of the proceedings off the Syrian coast from 14 to 27 December 1914 of HMS *Doris* - Captain Frank Larken to Vice-Admiral HMS *Swiftsure*, Port Said, 27.12.1914. File FO 371/2489 is full of documents on Armenian and other Christian espionage against the Turks; see also FO 371/3058/114458.

<sup>59</sup> FO 371/2477/98392: Mr. O'Beirne to Foreign Office, cipher telegram, No. 375, Sofia, 20.7.1915.

<sup>60</sup> FO 371/2770/180941: War Trade Intelligence Department, Secret Report No. 21/454, Bucharest, 4.8.1916.

they should be ready on the spot to take up arms and assist the Russians 'in ridding the Christian population of Asia Minor and Armenia, once and for all, of the Turkish yoke'<sup>61</sup>.

### ENTRY OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE INTO THE WAR

When Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire in November 1914, the Armenians of Russia pledged loyalty to Tsar Nicholas II, who promised 'to free' the Turkish Armenians. Soon after, Alexander Hatisian, the president of the Armenian National Bureau in Tiflis, in an appeal to the Tsar, declared:

*'From all the countries the Armenians are hurrying to enter the ranks of the glorious Russian Army, in order, with their blood, to serve for the victory of the Russian arms... Let the Russian flag fly freely over the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus... Let the Armenian people of Turkey, who have suffered for the faith of Christ, receive resurrection for a new life under the protection of Russia'.*

The Armenian National Bureau began to make auxiliary military preparations, and to organise bands called *kumbas*, which joined the Russian army<sup>62</sup>.

Full of optimism, the Russian Armenians, in addition to contributing more than 200,000 men to the regular Tsarist armies, formed seven volunteer contingents specifically to assist in the 'liberation' of 'Turkish Armenia'. The partisan tactics of the volunteers, and their knowledge of the rugged terrain, proved invaluable to the Russian war effort<sup>63</sup>. This is also confirmed by two Armenian leaders. Avedis Aharonian, the president of the Armenian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, stated on 26 February 1919:

*'... At the very beginning of the war, our nation not only forgot all the grievances against Tsarist rule, and rallied wholeheartedly to the Russian flag, in support of the Allied cause, but our kinsmen in Tur-*

<sup>61</sup> FO 371/2147/74733: P. Stevens to Foreign Office, dispatch, 29.10.1914.

<sup>62</sup> *Horizon*, Tiflis, 30.11.1914; Hovannisian: *Road to independence*, p. 45; Uras, op. cit., p. 594; Stankevich, op. cit., p. 239; FO 371/2484 and 2485/46941.

<sup>63</sup> See also Karganoff: *La participation des Arméniens à la guerre mondiale sur le front du Caucase, 1914-1918*; Tchalkouchian, op. cit., pp. 21-31; Khatissian: 'Kaghakapeti me hishaktaknere', *Hairenik Amsakir*, X, October 1932, pp. 155-9.

*key and all over the world, offered to the Government of the Tsar (the Russian Embassy archives in Paris prove this) to establish and support Armenian legions, at their own expense, to fight side by side with the Russian troops under the command of Russian generals...'*

Boghos Noubar, president of the Armenian National Delegation, was more revealing when he added:

*'...At the beginning of the war, the Turkish Government had offered to grant to the Armenians a sort of autonomy, asking from them, in exchange, volunteers to rouse the Caucasus against Russia. The Armenians rejected this proposal and placed themselves, without hesitation, on the side of the Entente Powers, from whom they expected liberation...'*<sup>64</sup>

In a letter dated 28 October 1914, Garabet Hagopian, the chairman of the Armenian Patriotic Association in London, informed British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey that the Armenian people had not been idle spectators, but that when the war broke out, they offered up 'special supplications in their Churches for the success of the land and sea forces of the British Empire'. Armenians serving in the Russian lines with the Caucasian Army were 'giving a good account of themselves', while a number of them were serving with the French army as volunteers. He went on to observe that, after the war resulting in the 'glorious victory of the Allies', Russia should be given a mandate to take charge of the eastern provinces of Turkey, and establish 'a really efficient and honest administration' under which it might be possible for the Armenians to freely exercise their duty and privileges 'as Christians and as pioneers of a true civilisation'<sup>65</sup>.

On 10 November, Lieutenant-Colonel G. M. Gregory, president of the Armenian United Association of London, in a letter to the Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, remarked:

*'It is well known to the Government that the Armenians, as a body, whether British-born, naturalized or Ottoman subjects, are absolutely loyal to the Allies who are now opposed to Germany, Austria,*

<sup>64</sup> FO 371/4376/PID 206: Paris Peace Conference, 26.2.1919.

<sup>65</sup> FO 371/2116/64791: Garabet Hagopian to Grey, letter, 28.10.1914.



*and Turkey. Considerable numbers of them are fighting under the Russian flag, while smaller numbers are with the French and British forces*<sup>66</sup>.

On 5 December, one of the Armenian leaders in the United Kingdom, Krikor Behesnilian, wrote to Sir Edward Grey:

*'I hardly need to convince you that the Armenians at home and abroad are on the side of the Allies, praying and longing for a victory for them... Writing as I do in the name of the Armenians in England, and in my own name, I may be allowed to state that it truly is hard for us to be considered by the law as alien enemies when we have a natural dislike for Turkey as a misruled State, and abhor her latest madness. We are quite justified to expect a deserving defeat and ultimate dismemberment for that country...'*<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and many other British dignitaries, including Armenophiles such as Lord Bryce, Lord Robert Cecil, and others, admitted that, 'during the war the Allies definitely encouraged the Armenians to join as volunteers in fighting for the Allied cause, and supplied them with munitions of war...'<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, a committee was established in Batum, consisting of Russian, Armenian, and Greek members, in order to facilitate the import into Turkey of arms, ammunition, and explosives; to provoke rebellions in the Black Sea region by utilising the services of the Armenians and Greeks living there; and to gather intelligence and pass it on to the Russians. Many Armenians in the towns and villages east of the Hopa-Erzurum-Hinis-Van line did not comply with the call for enlistment, and escaped to Russia, where they joined the Armenian organisation working against the Ottoman Empire. Numerous Russian weapons were discovered in the houses, schools, and churches of the Armenians in a number of places, and Armenian bands, consisting mostly of army deserters, began to attack and murder innocent Muslim villagers.

<sup>66</sup> FO 369/776/72725: G. M. Gregory, president of the Armenian United Association of London to Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, London letter, 10.11.1914.

<sup>67</sup> FO 371/776/79716: Krikor Behesnilian to Grey, private letter, 5.12.1914.

<sup>68</sup> FO 371/5209/E 2245: Harold Spender to Lloyd George, memorandum entitled 'The peace settlement in the Near East', received on 27.3.1920.

Following these incidents, the Ottoman Third Army command began to realise that the Armenians were plotting a rebellion. In fact, plans for such a rebellion were under way in various places where arms, ammunition, and explosives had been stored for future use. The principal centres of the rebellion were to be Van, Bitlis, Erzurum, and Karahisar, and secondary centres were to be Sivas, Kayseri, and Diyarbakır - all locations on the supply lines of the Ottoman Army. As it became evident from the confessions of a number of Armenians before the court-martial held at Sivas, the Armenians had already appointed generals, inspectors, war commanders, and guerrilla leaders, and had ordered the registration of all Armenian males of thirteen and over at the Dashnak branches. They would later be armed and used in the revolt.

This was partly confirmed by Francis Blyth Kirby, the former acting British vice-consul at Rostow-on-Don, who wrote to the Foreign Office from London five days after the Russians declared war on Turkey, that, before leaving his post, a wealthy Armenian prince named David Chernoff had told him that the Armenians in Russia and Turkey were extremely anxious that war should break out between these two countries, in which case they would avenge themselves on the Turks for all the wrongs they claimed to have suffered at their hands. He also stated that 60,000 Armenians in the Caucasus, and on the frontier, had already volunteered to fight the Turks in the event of war breaking out, and were begging the Russian Government to supply them with arms. He believed that a revolution would break out among the Armenians generally, if they thought that they could rely on the support of Russia under whose protection they hoped to obtain the freedom of their country<sup>69</sup>.

In Cairo, Bogos Noubar, one of the Armenian leaders in the recent negotiations for the introduction of reforms in eastern Turkey, on 12 November represented to M. Cheetham, the British diplomatic representative there, that the Armenian population of Cilicia would, now that there was no longer any hope of agreement with Turkey, be ready to enrol themselves as volunteers to support a possible disembarkation at Alexandretta (İskenderun), Mersin, or Adana, by the allied forces. Valuable assistance could be provided by the Armenians of the mountainous districts who, if supplied with arms and ammunition, would rise against Turkey. A number of men could also be supplied by the Egyptian Armenians.

<sup>69</sup> FO 371/2146/68443: Francis Blyth Kirby to Foreign Office, 6.11.1914.

At the British Foreign Office, Lancelot Oliphant, an official, commented on this suggestion as follows:

*'It is obvious that Russian success near Erzeroum would encourage the Armenian districts, south west of that city, and a landing at Alexandretta might be the last link in a chain to cut across the Empire and cripple it most seriously. The difficulty lies in the shortage of arms, and the absence of the means of distributing them. I venture to think that, while the crucial struggle continues to rage in West Europe, it might be better to wait, unless the Russians desire such action as a diversion...'*

Other officials, and Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey himself, did not support this venture, as they did not consider it wise to arm and stiffen, by expeditionary forces, an 'undisciplined and irregular' population; and besides, there were no trustworthy, representative Armenian leaders with whom to communicate, and through whom to distribute the arms. The British could not spare such arms, nor could they get them into the country<sup>70</sup>.

Nevertheless the doom of the Ottoman minorities was sealed in Paris, on 30 December, when Sir Henry McMahon, representing the British Foreign Office, met his French opposite, M. Gout, who was accompanied by Colonel Hamelin of the French War Office, and M. Peretti of the French Foreign Office. McMahon was accompanied by G. H. Fitzmaurice of the British Embassy in Istanbul, and Percy Loraine of the British Embassy in Paris. M. Gout suggested that the Allies should stir up an anti-Turkish movement among the Arabs, and also use agents to promote an anti-Turkish movement among the Maronites and others. To this, McMahon replied that it would seem unwise to attempt to engineer revolts, etc., 'unless we were in a position to support them effectively', he remarked<sup>71</sup>.

'When the Great War came', points out Aubrey Herbert, 'the Christian minorities (in the Ottoman Empire) were hailed by the French and by Mr. Lloyd George as the small allies of the Great Powers who were fighting Turkey'. The Armenians, 'flattered by their recognition, went to the help of the invading Russian troops..., and from that moment their

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., document No. 70404: Cheetham to Grey, 12.11.1914.

<sup>71</sup> FO 371/2480/1942: Bertie to Foreign Office, Paris dispatch, 4.1.1915, enclosing copy of dispatch from McMahon to Grey, dated 1.1.1915.

peril became dreadful and imminent. Their doom was made irrevocable when Mr. Lloyd George, changeable in everything else, remained steadfast in his appeal to the minorities in Asia Minor to wage war on our behalf, remarks Herbert<sup>72</sup>.

In fact, Lieutenant-General Sir John Maxwell had informed Lord Kitchener on 18 October that Christians in large numbers had taken refuge in the Lebanon, where they were practically without 'any means of defence'. He had been asked by the committee in Cairo whether the British Government would give their support to the arrangement made with Greek Prime Minister Venizelos for the supply of arms to be sent over immediately hostilities were commenced with Turkey. They stated that they could do this easily if the idea were supported by the British Government. When the Foreign Office asked for Sir Louis Mallet's views on this, the latter replied that, if Britain were at war with Turkey, and in the event of operations in Syria, the supply of arms to Maronites and other Christians of the Lebanon would be 'the natural' step to take 'as they occupy good position for cutting the Turkish railway communications between Beyrout and Homs and Damascus; and successful raids could hold up the Turks from receiving reinforcements from the North'. But Mallet stressed that it was dangerous to give any undertaking to the committee before hostilities began, as it might be divulged, and might have the effect of driving the Turks to occupy the Lebanon at once, and 'possibly kill the Christians before they are armed'<sup>73</sup>.

Sir F. Elliot, the British minister in Athens, telegraphed to Grey on 7 December that some Maronite emissaries had obtained from the Greek Government the promise of about 2,000 Gras rifles and a large quantity of ammunition 'in order to raise an insurrection in the Lebanon', provided that the Allied Powers consented. Elliot asked Grey, if the British Government concurred, to send the necessary instructions to the Admirals and to Cyprus, where the vessel, which would also be lent by the Greek Government, would call<sup>74</sup>. The Foreign Office informed Sir F. Bertie, their ambassador in Paris, and asked him to bring this to the notice of

<sup>72</sup> Aubrey Herbert, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>73</sup> FO 371/2143/61124: Sir John Maxwell to Earl Kitchener, cipher telegram No. 183, 18.10.1914.

<sup>74</sup> FO 371/2147/79916: Sir F. Elliot to Grey, cipher telegram No. 388, Athens, 7.12.1914.

the French Government. The French Government agreed that the 'Maronite insurrection' would probably be premature, but they did not wish to discourage it. Thereupon the British Foreign Office informed Elliott that, if the Maronites fully realised the danger to which they would be exposed should the arms and ammunition be found in their possession, and nonetheless still desired them, the British Government would not oppose, though they could not aid the conveyance of the munitions to the Lebanon<sup>75</sup>.

Meanwhile, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Harcourt, informed the officer administering the Government of Cyprus that the Maronite Christians of the Lebanon were being supplied with arms by the Greek Government 'to resist Turkish attacks'. It was proposed that the arms should be sent to Cyprus and transported to Asia in small sailing boats. The administrator of Cyprus should communicate confidentially with the British minister in Athens with a view to giving the necessary facilities for the passage, through Cyprus, of these munitions.

High Commissioner Clauson obeyed these instructions and telegraphed to Athens as follows: 'I am instructed to communicate with you with a view to the necessary facilities being given for the transit of Greek Government arms. Secrecy is essential to avoid complications with the Cyprus Greeks and Moslems'. But he warned the Colonial Secretary as follows: 'No doubt you realize the possibility of local irredentist vapouring over Hellenic munitions of war and Moslem misunderstanding. The Cyprus Greeks normally incline to oppress the local Maronites and I cannot understand the Greek Government's *locus standi* in the Lebanon, but presumably the Foreign Office is consulting Consul-General Cumberbatch...'<sup>76</sup>. The arms were apparently ultimately delivered to the Maronites.

Between November 1914 and May 1915 Armenian extremists and insurgents caused many incidents all over the Ottoman Empire, as is confirmed by Turkish war documents<sup>77</sup>. Armenian soldiers, officers, and doc-

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., document No. 81212: Sir F. Bertie to Foreign Office, cipher telegram No. 550, Paris, 10.12.1914.

<sup>76</sup> FO 371/2479/1820: Colonial Secretary Harcourt to High Commissioner of Cyprus, cipher telegram, 1.1.1915.

<sup>77</sup> *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* No. 1812; Kâzım, Commander of the mobile division at Saray to Commander of Third Army, cipher telegram, 29.11.1914, p. 23; Niyazi Ahmet

tors, serving in the Turkish Army, took every opportunity to escape with their weapons, and to join the Russian Army, taking with them vital information about the position and resources of the army. It was later observed on many occasions that, in the most critical moment of a battle, the positions of Turkish munitions and reserves were pointed out to the Russians. Moreover, the Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman Army were inciting the Turkish soldiers to desert, and thus creating confusion and defeatism in the battle lines. Some Armenians behind the lines did not hesitate to murder wounded Turkish soldiers who were sent back for treatment, and constantly communicated with the Armenians in the Russian Army, informing them of the position and state of the Turkish units. Coded messages exchanged between them were frequently intercepted<sup>78</sup>.

On 31 January 1915 the Director-General of Security of the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior informed the Director of Ottoman Intelligence that, reliable sources reported irregular communication between the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul and the Catholicosate at Etchmiadzin, through the Italian Embassy in the Ottoman capital. The Intelligence Service was therefore requested to conduct an extensive and secret investigation on the method of such communication, 'which is likely to facilitate and effect the transmission of our most important secrets, and our military position, to Russia', it declared. Despite the censorship on correspondence and communications with foreign countries, the Armenians were reported to have been carrying on with their external communications, and also passing on information under coded words and sentences the meaning of which was only known to themselves<sup>79</sup>.

On 11 February, a Major K. El-Awad wrote to Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador in Washington, suggesting the possibility of a voluntary and armed expedition against the Turkish forces in Syria.

*'If Great Britain could accept our volunteers in some camp in Cyprus where, with the help of a few non-commissioned officers, I could turn them into an organised body, and hold them ready within a striking*

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Banoğlu: *Ermeni'nin Ermeni'ye zulmü* (the oppression of the Armenian by the Armenian), Ankara 1976, p. 59; *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, pp. 50-51 and 63-4, document No. 1906 (102): from the Commander, special service volunteers' battalion, to Third Army Commander, circa 15.2.1915.

<sup>78</sup> *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, p. 449.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, document No. 1901, p. 97.

*distance to land on the Lebanon coasts, in case of necessity, or use them as an auxiliary force to an expeditionary force of the Allies, the results would outweigh any expenditure and trouble', he declared. '... This project would influence favourably the wavering Druses and the Mohamedan population of Syria... we shall have to look to the Allies for transportation, arming and maintenance of these volunteers'.*

But the Foreign Office and the War Office did not concur, and the scheme was apparently turned down<sup>80</sup>.

On 24 February Count Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London, wrote to the British Foreign Office, asking them, on behalf of the Russian Foreign Minister M. Sazonov, whether the British Government would join with France in sending arms and ammunition to Alexandretta for the use by the Armenians against the Turks. This inquiry called forth a number of comments at the Foreign Office. Harold Nicolson remarked:

*'Even if we could spare these rifles, I do not see how we could organise their transport from Alexandretta to the interior, or trust the Armenians to make any effective use of them. Besides, now that the Goeben and Breslau will be occupied, I do not see why the Russians shouldn't attempt to land arms at Samsun'.*

G. T. Clerk commented: 'This is an impracticable scheme in the present circumstances'. Thereupon Sir Edward Grey replied, with the concurrence of the Army Council, that the difficulty of transporting these munitions from Alexandretta to the interior rendered the scheme impracticable, and suggested that, if the Russian Government thought that 'the Armenian insurgents' would be of real value to the Allies, the Russians themselves should supply them with these munitions through the Black Sea littoral<sup>81</sup>.

It is interesting to note in this connection that, on 15 February, Sir Henry McMahon wrote to Sir Edward Grey, confidentially, giving a 'brief and incomplete summary' of the views held by what he called 'prominent and representative' Syrians, both in Egypt and Syria, about the future of the latter country.

<sup>80</sup> FO 371/2480/27310: Sir Cecil Spring-Rice to Grey, Washington dispatch no. 55, 15.2.1915, transmitting copy of a letter from a Major K. El-Awad.

<sup>81</sup> FO 371/2484/46942: Russian ambassador to Foreign Office, 17.4.1915.

*'In the North of Syria it is of vital importance to England that no other Naval Power should hold Alexandretta', they had declared. 'Alexandretta is the finest natural port in the Mediterranean and can be made impregnable. Whoever holds it, commands the entrance to the Suez Canal. Her potential value as a city of commerce requires no dreamer to foresee'.*

The Maronites alone stood by France; the Syrian Orthodox, the Greek and Armenian Churches were against her. Sentiment, however, might urge the forward school of French politicians to insist on the French Government laying claim to part, at least, of Syria. 'There is, of course, more than a probability that Russia will also attempt to push down towards Adana and Alexandretta from the Armenian Plateau...', concluded McMahon<sup>82</sup>.

Back in Anatolia, in the winter of 1914 the Ottoman Army set out to regain the provinces it had lost to Russia in 1829 and 1878. Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, personally directed the Caucasus campaign, but his 100,000-man force was decimated at Sarikamış in January 1915, by the bitter cold weather and by the stubborn resistance of several Russian divisions assisted by three Armenian volunteer units from Transcaucasia<sup>83</sup>. The Armenians were acclaimed by all the leading organs of the Russian press as the 'saviours' of the Caucasus<sup>84</sup>. According to the Italian paper *Tribuna* of 14 May 1915, 'Enver Pasha accused the Armenians as traitors, and this accusation was probably correct, for the Armenians never failed, under any circumstance, to desire the triumphant march of Russia, and to help towards it ... They hoped to see the Salvation reborn from the embers of Europe in conflagration...', declared the paper<sup>85</sup>. The way was

<sup>82</sup> FO 371/2480/23865: Sir Henry McMahon to Grey, confidential dispatch no. 23, Cairo, 15.2.1915.

<sup>83</sup> N. Korsium: *Sarykamyshskaia operatsiia na Kavkaskem fronte morovoi voniny v 1914-1915 godu*, Moscow 1937; E. V. Maslovskii: *Mirovaia voina na Kavkaskem fronte, 1914-1917*, Paris 1937, pp. 51-134; W. E. D. Allen and Paul Muratoff: *Caucasian battlefields..., 1828-1921*, Cambridge 1953, pp. 240-85; M. Larcher: *La guerre Turquie dans la guerre mondiale*, Paris 1926, pp. 375-89; Harutiunian: 'Sarighamishi jakatamarti dere Kovkase turtakan nerkhuzhman vtongits prkelu gordsum (1914), t. dektember', *Banber Hayastani Arkhiunesi*, 2, 1967, pp. 89-109; Ali İhsan Sabis: *Harb hatıralarım* (my war memoirs), Ankara, n.d., vol. II, pp. 41-160; Hovannisian, op.cit., pp. 45-7.

<sup>84</sup> FO 371/6561/E 14000: British Armenian Committee: *The case for Armenia*, 1921.

<sup>85</sup> FO 371/2771/125694: The Residency, Cairo, secret dispatch, 2.6.1916, enclosing secret summary No. 4 of the Arab Bureau, 16.6.1916; *Tribuna*, 14.5.1916.



now prepared for a new Russian push into eastern Anatolia, to be accompanied by an open revolt against the Sultan<sup>86</sup>.

In March 1915, Armenian insurgents indulged in numerous atrocities against the civilian Muslim population of a number of villages. The victims included women and children. These atrocities are too horrible to describe here<sup>87</sup>. The Dashnaktsutiun as a party bears a major portion of responsibility, for it was often the leading force in perpetrating these massacres. The Dashnakists organised bands, recruited mainly from Armenian army deserters, that would attack the Muslims and often exterminate the populations of entire villages, as is confirmed by Vorontsov-Dashkov<sup>88</sup>, who had himself made use of such bands<sup>89</sup>.

At the All-Armenia National Congress held in Tiflis in February 1915, it was revealed that the Russian Government had given the Dashnakists 242,000 roubles to arm the Turkish Armenians and to provoke their uprising at an opportune moment, as is revealed by B. A. Borian, an Armenian writer<sup>90</sup>. In March 1915 Dashnak bands attacked a small gendarmerie detachment between Zeytun and Maraş, and killed six gendarmes. By the middle of the month there was a full-scale rebellion among the Armenians of the Province of Van, who were armed with Russian weapons - although the main Van rebellion did not begin until 17 April.

As these incidents continued, on 3 March, M. Varandian, the delegate of the Armenian committee in Sofia (Bulgaria), requested Sir H. Bax-Ironside, the British minister there, to ask the British Government whether it could use the services of 20,000 Armenian volunteers to operate a descent upon the coast of Licia, in the region of Alexandretta. Half of the troops were ready in America, and the rest in the Balkans. Several com-

<sup>86</sup> Hovannisian, op. cit., pp. 45-7; Hikmet Bayur: 'Birinci Genel Savaş'tan sonra yapılan barış antlaşmalarımız' (our peace treaties after the First World War), *Bellelen*, XXX, No. 117, January 1966, pp. 439-80; Allen and Muratoff, op. cit. pp. 251-77; Sabis II, pp. 41-160; FO 371 files 2146, 2484 and 2485.

<sup>87</sup> See *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, documents nos. 15 and 1819, pp. 40-41.

<sup>88</sup> I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: *Vsepaddonneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu kavkazskim kraem generala adiutanta grafa Vorontsiva-Dashkova*, 1907, pp. 13-4; see also Firuz Kazemzadeh: *The struggle for Transcaucasia*, Oxford 1951, p. 19.

<sup>89</sup> See note 32 above.

<sup>90</sup> B. A. Borian: *Armenia, mezhdunarodnaia diplomatii i S.S.R.*, Moscow 1928, vol. I, pp. 360-2; Kazemzadeh, op. cit., p. 26; Uras, p. 604.

mittees existed for sending the troops to the destination to be chosen by the British Government: Cyprus was suggested as a base. The Armenian committee hoped that, by their cooperation in the conquest of this region, they would secure its being placed under British protection.

The British War Office asked the Foreign Office to find out from Count Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London, who the responsible leaders of these Armenians were, and whether they could take over the arms if landed at, or near, Alexandretta, without an expedition being sent there to occupy the country adjacent to the harbour. 'The arming of these Armenians is part of a scheme for the occupation of Alexandretta, which is not in contemplation at the present moment', added the War Office. On 6 March the Foreign Office duly complied with the War Office request, and asked Count Benckendorff for the names of the responsible leaders of the insurgent movement; and when it took the Russian ambassador a long time to reply, the Army Council decided that no useful purpose would be served by pursuing the scheme. The Foreign Office then informed Bax-Ironside in Sofia that the scheme was impracticable, and that he should avoid giving the Armenian committee any encouragement<sup>91</sup>.

Early in March 1915, Lord James Bryce, a champion of the Armenians, called at the Foreign Office with a suggestion that Russia should be approached to announce that she would be prepared to agree to an autonomous Armenia being eventually instituted under Russian protection. Such a declaration would please the Armenians, Bryce thought, and stimulate them to afford material assistance to the Allies in conflict with Turkey. He said that there were some thousands of Armenians, in the United States principally, who would gladly volunteer for service, and they might be sent to Egypt and Cyprus for training. Lord Kitchener, however, did not consider this feasible for various military reasons<sup>92</sup>.

On 22 March, Miran Sevasly, an Armenian lawyer of Boston, U.S.A., wrote to Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador in Washington, asking for permission for six Armenians to go to Cyprus in order to organise a rising in Cilicia against the Turks. These Armenians were all Turkish subjects and belonged to the Hintchak Party.

<sup>91</sup> FO 371/2484/25073, 25167 and 28172: Ironside to Foreign Office, 3.3.1915; War Office to Foreign Office, 4 and 9.3.1915.

<sup>92</sup> FO 371/2485/30439: Minute by Sir A. Nicolson, 9.3.1915.

*'The Armenians', he added, 'who have always been on the side of the Allies, and who have sent thousands of volunteers to France, Germany and the Caucasus to join the French or Russian armies, are now shedding their blood for the cause of the Powers of the Triple Entente. Their trip is patriotic, to help the Allies to bring the downfall of Turkey'.*

Two weeks later Sevasly wrote, in response to a query, about their purpose in Cyprus, and explained that they would stay there for some time until they found a boat to take them to the Cilician coast. On 7 April Spring-Rice sent to Grey the correspondence with Miran Sevasly, who had said that he was acquainted with Lord Bryce, and asked whether facilities should be granted. The Foreign Secretary thereupon consulted Lord Bryce about Sevasly's credentials. Bryce declared that he had known Sevasly for many years, and had always found him trustworthy. He wrote to the Foreign Office on 26 April:

*'They are, as I told the Secretary of State and the Admiralty some time ago, trying to organise a rising of the warlike Armenian mountaineers of Cilicia against the Turks when a favourable moment arrives. Such a rising might be decidedly useful to us when we are fighting the Turks on land; and Cyprus is the best place from which to try to open communication with the Armenians of Marash, Anital (? Antep) and Zeitun. Steps are now being taken, as I understand, with the approval of the War Office, to form a force of Armenian volunteers to act somewhere'.*

The Foreign Office transmitted the copies of the correspondence with Miran Sevasly to the Colonial Office, and recalled that the Army Council had repeatedly expressed the view that half-organised volunteer risings would have little value, and that they should not be encouraged. Besides, such an expedition would result in 'the massacre of many innocent Armenians'. Sir Edward Grey proposed, therefore, to instruct the British ambassador in Washington to inform Sevasly that the desired permission could not be granted<sup>93</sup>.

This was followed by a letter from Miran Seraslan, chairman, M. D. Manuelian, treasurer, and Y. Servart, secretary, of the Armenian National

<sup>93</sup> Colonial Office documents CO 67/178/20859: Law to Colonial Office, 4.5.1915.

Defence Committee of America, addressed to Sir Edward Grey from Boston, U.S.A., and dated 23 March 1915, informing the latter that they were making preparations to send volunteers to Cilicia, where a large number of the population would 'unfurl the banner of insurrection against Turkish rule', which would greatly help to disperse and to prevent the onward march of the Turks against Egypt. This insurrectionary movement of the Armenians would be able to bear fruit, they claimed, because it would extend from the seashore, viz. from that part of the country known as 'Souedian (Süveydiye) and Tchokmarzovan (?) through Giaouz-Dagh (Yavuzdağ) to Marash and Fundejak (Fındıcık), and thence to Zeitoun, Furnuz, Hadjin and Sis, and thus establishing a war zone extending from the Taurus to the sea'. The Foreign Office found this scheme slightly more mature than that previously put forward, but equally impracticable<sup>94</sup>.

Again early in April, British Armenophil MP Aneurin Williams informed Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, that he had put down a question for the day that the House of Commons would re-assemble, asking of the British Government whether it would use its influence to secure for 'Armenia', after the war, some measure of autonomy similar to that promised to Poland. As chairman of the British Armenian Committee he claimed to know that the Armenians were 'most anxious' about their future, and did not wish to be left 'entirely to the will of Russia'. They recognised that Russian protection over, or perhaps annexation of, their country was inevitable; but they were very anxious that, if this came about, it should not come about 'by the other Great Powers simply washing their hands of Armenia and recognising that it is Russia only who is concerned'. They desired that there should, at least, be some definite compact between Russia and the other Great Powers, by which, certain definite rights would be secured to 'Armenia', even under Russian ownership or suzerainty. They looked, above all, to England which, if possible, should govern their country. 'They recognise, of course', remarked Williams, 'that in Armenia they are a minority, though nearly half the population, and by far the largest homogeneous element, besides being the most progressive'. They therefore did not ask for self-government in the full sense, which was impossible in the existing condition of their country.

<sup>94</sup> FO 371/2485/41444: Armenian National Defence Committee of America to Grey, Boston, U.S.A., 23.3.1915.

Williams laid these considerations before the Foreign Secretary in the hope that he would give the Armenians 'all the comfort' he could in their 'grave anxiety'<sup>95</sup>.

The secretary of the Armenian Committee in Paris, Archag Tchobanian, too, who was described by Aneurin Williams as 'a very noted author among the Armenians', addressed a similar letter to Sir Edward Grey, repeating the same points, and supporting a Russian protectorate over, rather than an annexation of, his country, which would include most of eastern Turkey<sup>96</sup>. He repeated these on 5 May, insisting on an autonomous Armenia based on the reform scheme of 1913, to include the six eastern provinces, plus Cilicia, where the Armenians, though not in a majority, 'constitute its most important ethnical unit, and since a commercial outlet will be essential to the future state'.

Sir Edward Grey did not hesitate to please the Armenian extremists who were already being exploited in the various theatres of war by the Entente Powers, for their ulterior purposes. On 21 April, Lieutenant-Colonel G. M. Gregory, president, and Archag Tchobanian, secretary, of the Armenian Committees of London, Manchester, Paris and Brussels, wrote to Grey, expressing their gratitude to the British Government for the declaration of 'generous sympathy', which the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had made in Parliament in response to the question which was put by Aneurin Williams in connection with the Armenian people 'and their cause'<sup>97</sup>.

Meanwhile, on 7 April Enver Pasha informed the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul, who had complained to him about the treatment of the Armenians in Anatolia, that his disclosures did not tally with documentary evidence in Turkish hands. Nevertheless, he had ordered his commanders to inquire into the cases mentioned by the Patriarch, and remarked:

*'I am especially confident in, and evaluate tremendously the friendship and loyalty of, the emancipated Armenian nation towards the Ottoman Fatherland. Unfortunately, there are a few thoughtless people*

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., document no 40247: Williams to Grey, London letter, 3.4.1915.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., document no. 43561: Williams to Grey, London letter, 13.4.1915, enclosing copy of a letter from Archag Tchobanian to Grey, London, 13.4.1915.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., documents nos. 48572 and 56472: G. M. Gregory to Grey, London letter, 21.4.1915; A. Tchobanian, London, 5.5.1919 - memorandum on 'Les Aspirations Armeniennes'.

*who have been misled by foreigners..., and who are resorting to brute force in order to fulfil their aspirations'.*

It was, therefore, necessary for the safety and defence of the country that the Government should deal with such people with severity. He called upon the Patriarch to show the right path to, and inculcate wisdom in, such persons<sup>98</sup>. But such advice was not given, or if given, was not followed.

Early in April, the gendarmerie detachment which was dispatched to the Horasan village to look for an Armenian army deserter, captured many rifles, bombs, and dynamite. In searches carried out by the security forces at the Tuzlasar village of Hafik, many more weapons and bombs were found. During the search thirty Armenian insurgents opened fire on the gendarmes at the outskirts of the village, and escaped in the dark<sup>99</sup>.

As these incidents were taking place in Anatolia, the Russian ambassador in London informed the Foreign Office, on 17 April, that, from the information supplied by the Armenian deputies of Zeytun, Mavino Huiian, Michael Avardian, and Gasparian, the field staff of the Russian Caucasian Army reported as follows:

*'The organisation of the Hintchakists has many admirers throughout Cilicia, but particularly at Zaitum (Zeytun), where their number reaches almost 3,000; there are Committees at Aidana (Adana), Adjin (Hacin), Sis, Furnuz, Marash, and Aleppo. At the head of the movement might be placed the same persons who directed the movement of 1895, Tohadjian, Enidunian, Surenian, Tchakirian, Yagubian, and also Gasparian. The people of Zaitun assert that they can bring together up to 15,000 combatants, and they will be in a position to take in even the greatest number of weapons without any descent either at Alexandretta or its environs'.*

But the Foreign Office was not keen on the idea<sup>100</sup>. A week later, the Russian ambassador in Washington informed British Ambassador Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, that the Armenians offered to send 1,000 men via Canada

<sup>98</sup> *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, document no. 1824; *Documents*, no. 20 pp. 56-7 - acting Commander-in-Chief to the Patriarch, 7.4.1915.

<sup>99</sup> *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, document no. 1908 (104): Pertev Bey, Commander of the Twentieth Army Corps, Sivas, 8.4.1915, p. 69.

<sup>100</sup> FO 371/2484/46942: Russian ambassador to Foreign Office, 17.4.1915.

to cooperate in operations in Cilicia. They were ready to pay for uniforms and transport to the Canadian port. But after consultation with the War Office the British ambassador was instructed to decline the offer<sup>101</sup>.

### THE REVOLT IN VAN AND THE RELOCATION OF THE ARMENIANS

On 17 April, long before orders were issued for the relocation of the Armenians in Turkey, the Dashnaksutiun from the Caucasus organised a revolt in the city of Van, promising the Armenians living there Russian military assistance if they showed loyalty to the Tsar by helping drive the Muslims out. The Russian Army of the Caucasus had already begun an offensive towards Van with the help of a large force of Armenian volunteers recruited from Anatolian refugees and Caucasian residents. Leaving Erivan on 28 April, they reached Van on 14 May, and during the next two days they carried out a general slaughter of the local Muslim population, while the small Ottoman garrison had to retreat to the south of the lake.

An Armenian state was set up at Van under Russian protection, and an Armenian legion constituted 'to expel the Turks from the entire south shore of the lake in preparation for a concerted Russian drive into Bitlis vilâyet'<sup>102</sup>. Tsar Nicholas II sent a telegram to the Armenian revolutionary committee of Van on 21 May thanking it 'for its services to Russia', whilst the Armenian newspaper *Gochnak*, published in the United States, proudly reported on 24 May that 'only 1,600 Turks remain in Van', the rest having been slaughtered<sup>103</sup>.

Thus, encouraged by Russia, the Armenians had begun to cause much trouble behind the Turkish lines, particularly on the northeast front where they attacked Turkish villages, including Karahisar, inhabited by

<sup>101</sup> FO 371/2485/49515: Spring-Rice to Grey, Washington, 24.4.1915; *ibid.*, document no. 51438: Foreign Office to Spring-Rice, 29.4.1915.

<sup>102</sup> Hovannisian, *op. cit.*, p. 56; FO 371/2488/127223 and 58550; Başbakanlık Arşivi: *Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları* (Prime Minister's Archives: Minutes of the Council of Ministers), debates of 15-17 August 1915; *Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası*, no. 175, p. 321: 'Van ihtilâli ve katli-ami' (the rebellion and massacres of Van), 10.9.1915; Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw: *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols., Cambridge 1977, II, p. 316.

<sup>103</sup> Dış Politika Enstitüsü (Institute of Foreign Policy): *Dokuz soru ve cevapta Ermeni sorunu* (the Armenian issue in nine questions and answers), Ankara 1982, p. 23.

Muslims, which was completely destroyed and burnt down. The Armenians also revolted in many other places, and together with the local Greeks, acted as volunteers, informers, and saboteurs. Later, they were in communication with the allied forces which landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. The following report, which appeared in the Armenian journal *Mushag* of Tiflis on 22 April 1915, is very revealing:

*'Telegram received from Bulgaria by the Central Armenian Bureau of Tiflis: systematic massacres are taking place at Erzeroum, at Zeitoun and in the neighbourhood. Bloody collisions at Van and Mouche (Mus). Insurrection in Cilicia... Sultan has issued an iradeh ordering that Armenian soldiers (in the Ottoman Army) should be disarmed...'*<sup>104</sup>

On 20 April Enver Pasha informed the commander of the Ottoman Third Army that some of the Armenian and Greek soldiers in the Ottoman service, particularly those employed in labour battalions, were deserting, forming small bands everywhere, resorting to violence against the gendarmerie dispatched to arrest them, and becoming tools for certain political aims in places where large Armenian and Greek communities lived. As the number of desertions was rising, and the number of the gendarmerie in the provinces and districts had declined, the Armenian deserters at large were increasing every day because they could not be captured<sup>105</sup>.

Under the circumstances, with the Russians advancing along a wide front in the east, with the Armenian guerrillas spreading death and destruction while simultaneously attacking the Ottoman armies from the rear, and with the Allies invading the Empire along a wide front, the Ottoman Government had to do something about what it considered to be 'Armenian treachery'. Even after the Armenian revolt and atrocities in Van, the Ottoman Government made one final attempt to secure the loyalty of the Armenians. Summoning to a meeting the Patriarch, some Armenian deputies and other delegates, it warned them that drastic measures would be taken unless the Armenians stopped their atrocities against the Muslims and gave up working to undermine the war effort;

<sup>104</sup> FO 371/2488/59461: Williams to Primrose, 11.5.1915; *Mushag*, Tiflis, 22.4.1915.

<sup>105</sup> *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, no. 1907 (103): Enver to Third Army Commander, 20.4.1915, p. 66.



but the Armenian extremist leaders saw in this warning the weakness of the Ottoman Government, and intensified their activities to fulfil their aspirations<sup>106</sup>.

Even Sir Henry McMahon, the British high commissioner in Cairo, admitted, in a cipher telegram to the Foreign Office dated 12 May 1915, that the Turks were facing considerable trouble from the Armenians, and that the latter had risen in several places. 'Any information regarding such a movement would be of value to the Military Authorities here', he remarked. Two days later the Foreign Office replied: 'There has been an Armenian rising, apparently in Van, which has been suppressed...'<sup>107</sup> But when Lord Bryce asked a question in Parliament on 6 October 1915, about the so-called 'massacre' of Armenians, Sir Edward Grey lied through his teeth when he claimed that there was 'no ground for the suggestion that there has been any rising on the part of the Armenians'<sup>108</sup>.

Meanwhile, the possibility of widespread rebellion behind Turkish lines, and of the danger of the Ottoman Army having to fight on a number of fronts, with its lines of communication threatened, compelled the Ottoman Government, on 24 April, to decide to remove the Armenians from vulnerable strategic points where they could assist the enemy. This decision did not precede, but was the result of, Armenian rebellions and guerrilla activities which threatened the very existence of the Ottoman State by bringing about its total defeat at the hands of its enemies, let alone the fact the unarmed remnants of the Turkish population (children, women and old men - as the young men were fighting at the front) were subjected to many Armenian atrocities<sup>109</sup>.

The Government thus decided that the branches of the Hintchak, Dashnak and similar committees, both in the capital and the provinces, should be closed down immediately; that their documents and papers should be confiscated; that their leaders and active members known to the authorities, as well as 'influential and harmful' Armenians, should be

<sup>106</sup> Parmaksızoğlu, pp. 111-3; Dış Politika Enstitüsü: ...*Ermeni Sorunu* (the Armenian issue), p. 24.

<sup>107</sup> FO 371/2488/59096: McMahon to Foreign Office, cipher telegram, Cairo, 12.5.1915; Foreign Office to McMahon, cipher telegram, 14.5.1915.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, document no. 14883: Parliamentary Question by Lord Bryce, 6.10.1915.

<sup>109</sup> Sonyel: *Ottoman Armenians*, p. 299 and *Impact International* of 28.10.1983 to 10.11.1983, p. 5; see also Ulrich Trumppener: *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914-18*, Princeton 1968, p. 202.

arrested; that those whose residence in their usual abode was regarded as harmful should be gathered in suitable places, and measures taken to prevent their escape; that searches for weapons should be conducted in places considered necessary; and that the suspects should be brought before the courts-martial<sup>110</sup>. Following this decision of the Ministry of the Interior, a number of suspects were arrested in Istanbul.

On 26 May the Ottoman Supreme Command informed the Ministry of the Interior that it was decided to remove the Armenians from the eastern provinces of Anatolia, and from similar places where they were concentrated, to the south of Diyarbakır Province, to the valley of the Euphrates, near Urfa and Süleymaniye, in order to prevent them from setting up new centres of rebellion<sup>111</sup>. On the same day the Ministry of the Interior, in a memorandum, gave information to the Prime Minister about 'the rebellious and treacherous activities' of the Armenians, stressing the necessity of relocating them<sup>112</sup>. The following day (27 May), the provisional Law of Relocations (*Tehcir Kanunu*) was passed, authorising the military authorities to take measures 'against those who opposed the Government during war-time'<sup>113</sup>. It was a provisional law because Parliament was not in session. Parliament met and sanctioned it after 15 September.

The Council of Ministers issued strict instructions on the mode of relocating the Armenians. These, and rules about the mode of their transport, are included in instructions and regulations to be found among Ottoman documents some of which have been published by Turkish historians. In none of these documents is there any mention of 'massacre'; on the contrary, in every one of them strict instructions are given that the Armenians should be safely taken to their destination, and allowed to set up new abodes there<sup>114</sup>. These secret Ottoman documents, original in-

<sup>110</sup> *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, document no. 1829: Enver to Under-Secretary of National Defence, 26.4.1915, pp. 67-8.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, Genelkurmay (Chief of General Staff), no. 1/1, KLS 44, file 207, F. 2-3.

<sup>112</sup> Bayur in *Bellelen* XXX, no. 117, part 3, p. 37; from the minutes of the Council of Ministers, dated 30.5.1915, p. 213.

<sup>113</sup> *Tarih Vesikaları*, 1.6.1915; see also Başbakanlık Arşivi: *Meclis-i Vükelâ Mazbataları* (minutes of the Council of Ministers), decisions of May 14/27 and May 17/30, 1331/1915, quoted partly in Bayur, *Bellelen* no. 117, pp. 35-40; *Düstur*, 2. tertip, vol. I, p. 609, May 27, 1915.

<sup>114</sup> Başbakanlık Arşivi: Council of Ministers decree, vol. 198, decree no. 1331/163, May 1915.

structions issued by Talat Bey, then Minister of the Interior, connected with the relocations and captured by British Intelligence in Istanbul in the 1920s, are very revealing, as they include strict and explicit rules about the safeguarding of the life and property of the relocated Armenians<sup>115</sup>.

While these developments were taking place in Antolia, the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin informed the Russian Government, and the Russian ambassador in London was asked on 27 April to inform the British Foreign Office as follows: 'Le Catholicos des Armenians (?)... claims that Armenians of Turkey are being massacred. The Russian Ambassadors in Rome and Washington have been instructed to support the Armenian protest'<sup>116</sup>. It is rather strange that Russia, Britain and the U.S.A., who already had a number of agents in eastern Anatolia, were informed about the so-called 'massacres' of Armenians by the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin whose loyalty to the Allies and hatred of the Turks was beyond description. However, it is not strange that the Russian ambassadors in Rome and Washington (not those in Switzerland, Oslo or Helsinki) had been instructed to support the 'Armenian protest', as both of these countries were neutral but pro-Entente, at the time, and to expose them to this 'Armenian propaganda', would go a long way in winning over Italian and American public opinion, and influencing their governments to enter the war on the side of the Entente Powers. In fact, Italy would enter the war on 23 May 1915 (against Austria-Hungary), on 25 August (against Turkey), and on 26 August (against Germany); whilst the U.S.A. would declare war on Germany on 6 April 1917 and on Austria on 7 December 1917 (but not on Turkey).

When, again on 27 April, the Russian ambassador in London proposed that the French, British and Russian Governments should publish a message to the Porte, holding Turkish officials responsible for the so-called 'massacres', G. T. Clerk of the British Foreign Office made this rather interesting comment:

<sup>115</sup> *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, document no. 1916 (112), pp. 92-3; S. R. Sonyel: *Displacement of the Armenians - documents*, Ankara 1978; FO 371/9158/E 5523; Nevile Henderson to Lancelot Oliphant, 22.5.1923, enclosing Ottoman documents; *Düstur*, 2. tertip, VII, pp. 737-88; Shaw and Shaw op. cit., vol. II, p. 315.

<sup>116</sup> FO 371/2488/51009; Russian ambassador to Foreign Office, 27.4.1915.

*'Before we take action such as is here suggested, it would be well to find out what we can about these reported massacres. I think, therefore, we might begin by instructing our Ambassadors at Rome and Washington to support their Russian colleagues, if they find that the Italian and US Governments accept the statements of the Catholicos as credible. And if they do, we can prepare a communication to the Ottoman Government such as is here suggested, but I would omit any reference to 1860. What happened then was that the Powers, signatory of the Treaty of Paris, agreed that not more than 12,000 European troops should restore order in the Lebanon. Napoleon III at once provided 6,000, who went alone to Syria, only to find that Fuad Pasha had already exacted punishment for the Damascus massacre, and that they could not get hold of the Druse ringleaders. The final result was the establishment of the autonomy of the Lebanon under a Christian Governor-General, and we must provide the parallel to that by defeating the Turks, not by writing to them'*<sup>117</sup>.

In this minute, G. T. Clerk was referring to 'reported massacres', as he himself was not sure about the veracity, condition and extend of such incidents; nor was he sure whether the Catholicos was telling the truth; hence his proviso: 'if (our Ambassadors at Rome and Washington) find that the Italian and US Governments accept the statements of the Catholicos as credible'. Only if they did would the British Government support a communication to the Ottoman Government, as suggested.

Accordingly, on 29 April the British Foreign Office sent a cipher telegram to Sir C. Spring-Rice, the British ambassador in Washington, to the effect that the Russian Foreign Minister informed the Foreign Office that the Armenian Catholicos had invoked the intervention of the U. S. and Italian Governments, at the Porte, in regard to the 'reported massacres of Armenians'. The Russian ambassadors at Washington and Rome had been instructed to support the request of the Catholicos. 'If the Government to which you are accredited consider the case as presented by the Catholicos justifies their intervention, you may support your Russian colleague', it declared. This was repeated to Paris and Petrograd. The Foreign Office also informed Sir G. Buchanan, its ambassador in Petrograd, that the Russian Foreign Minister desired that the three Allied Govern-

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., document no. 51010: Russian ambassador to Foreign Office, 27.4.1915.

ments should publish a message to the Sublime Porte in regard to the 'reported massacres of Armenians'. 'Before taking this step, I think it would be advisable to await the result of the appeal of the Armenian Catholics to the Governments of the U.S. and Italy for their intervention at Constantinople', suggested the Foreign Office<sup>118</sup>.

On 1 May Sir C. Spring-Rice telegraphed to the Foreign Office that, according to the State Department, the U. S. ambassador had reported that the Armenians in Istanbul had been arrested. 'He has interviewed in their favour and does not believe their lives are in danger', stated the State Department, although it did not know what was happening in the country districts 'where there is even less security than in Constantinople'. The matter was then receiving the attention of the U. S. Government<sup>119</sup>. On 9 May the Russian ambassador in London, Count Benckendorff, informed the Foreign Office about the request of the U. S. consul at Van that his Government might be informed that the American colony was in danger<sup>120</sup>. Apparently Sazonoff had just received the following information from the Russian consul at Hoy (Khoi):

*'Armenian emissaries from Van have arrived at Khoi. They have sent me a short note from the American Consul at Van written in English and Armenian: a general rebellion has broken out in Van. The Government is threatening bombardment. American colony in danger. Please inform the American Government.'*

There was also a telegram from the French consul at Salonica (Selânik), which read as follows:

*'I have just learned from travellers arriving from Constantinople (Istanbul) that the Armenians at Van revolted and massacred the Government officials and Muslims. They blew up with dynamite the inn where the municipality is based. They were masters of the town for three days, after which troops sent from Erzurum retook the city and massacred the Armenians. In consequence of these events 2,800 Armenians were arrested at Constantinople. Among them were numerous emi-*

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.: Foreign Office to Sir C. Spring-Rice, cipher telegram no. 387, 29.4.1915.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., document no. 53135: Spring-Rice to Foreign Office, cipher telegram no. 493, Washington, 1.5.1915.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., document no. 27956: Russian ambassador to Foreign Office, London, 9.5.1915.

*ment people. Various house searches led to the discovery of compromising documents and bombs. It is believed that the Armenian revolutionaries intended, with the approval of the Allies, to kill Enver Pasha and Talat Bey, and to commit bomb outrages to provoke panic amongst the Muslim population. All the Armenians arrested were sent to Yeni Şehir, Asia Minor... French and English aged 15 to 20 years, living in Constantinople, have been invited to present themselves with all their luggage at the police department on 1 May, and were sent in an unknown direction. It was intended to concentrate them at Gallipoli'.*

This telegram was left at the British Foreign Office by the French chargé d'affaires M. Fleuriau. A. Nicolson of the Foreign Office, in minuting it on 10 May, observed:

*'According to the news furnished by the French Consulat, Salonica, it would appear that massacres were not all on one side, and that Armenians for a time held Van and disposed of a good many Turks'*<sup>121</sup>.

The following day (11 May), the British ambassador at Petrograd, Sir G. Buchanan, informed Foreign Secretary Grey that the Russian Foreign Minister thought the Allies ought to let it be known that they should hold Turkey responsible at the end of the war 'for any massacre of Armenians', and suggested that the three Allied Governments should publish a declaration in this connection, in their respective official journals, on a given day to be agreed on, as follows: 'In face of these fresh crimes committed by Turkey against *Christianity and civilisation*, the Allied Governments announce publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold all the members of the Ottoman Government, as well as such of their agents as are implicated, personally responsible for the Armenian massacres'<sup>122</sup>.

It is interesting to note that this suggestion was made by the Russian Government, probably on the request of Armenian extremist leaders, both of them instigators of the Turco-Armenian conflict then raging in Anatolia, but both of them thinking about its propaganda value, particularly at a time when Italy, U.S.A., Greece, Roumania, Bulgaria, etc. were wavering to participate in the war. But on 12 May British Foreign Secretary

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., document no. 58350: Minute by A. Nicolson, Foreign Office, 10.5.1915.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., document no. 58387: Buchanan to Foreign Office, telegram no. 652, Petrograd, 11.5.1915.

Grey asked his ambassador in Paris, Sir F. Bertie, to consult with the French Foreign Minister about the proposed pronouncement, and observed that such a declaration would have 'no moderating effect whatever on the Turkish authorities, and indeed might, on the contrary, instigate them to be still more vindictive towards the Christians'.

*'We shall, when the occasion arrives, be equally free to take what measures we consider justifiable and necessary against guilty Turkish authorities, whether we had or had not previously issued a public notification of our intention',* he remarked <sup>123</sup>.

As the Allies were discussing the possibility of making representations to the Ottoman Government, Sir Henry McMahon informed the Foreign Office on 12 May that information in Cairo pointed to the Turks having 'considerable trouble with the Armenians' who had 'risen in several places'. 'Any information regarding such a movement would be of value to the Military Authorities here', he declared. This is the first indication that the Turco-Armenian conflict in Anatolia would be used by the British as wartime propaganda. McMahon also added that, a certain Hanem-ia, a Dashnakist leader in Cairo, had stated that he had a friend in Sofia by the name of Mateos Hagopian who was in a position to give information. 'While not appearing to favour the Tashnagist party, it might be as well to get into touch with Hagopian and see if he can give any information. Apart from the revolutionary interest, he might be able to give useful military information', suggested McMahon. Two days later the Foreign Office informed him that there had been 'an Armenian rising apparently in Van', which had been suppressed. The Turks were '*apparently* encouraging massacres throughout Armenia'. No more was known for the time being <sup>124</sup>.

About a week later, on 18 May, Sir H. O. Bax-Ironside, the British minister in Sofia, wrote to Sir Edward Grey, forwarding the copy of a letter which he had received from an Armenian named Migirditch Neressian, in which he appealed to the Allies, particularly to England, to procure 'freedom and independence' to the Armenians, and declared:

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.: Grey to Bertie, telegram no. 1185, Foreign Office, 12.5.1915.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., document no. 59096: McMahon to Foreign Office, cipher telegram no. 180, Cairo, 12.5.1915.

*'It is this cherished hope which impelled many thousands of Armenians, at the commencement of the gigantic struggle, to join the ranks of the Allies both in France and in the Caucasus, against the mighty foes of freedom and progress'.*

He then went on to state:

*'In the district of Zeitoun the Armenian population has openly revolted against the state authorities. Our organisation in that section is in complete control of the situation, having armed all the male population capable of carrying arms. In Chok-Marsuan, Adang (Adana), Diort-Yol and vicinity, including almost the whole of Cilicia, the organisation is supreme, although the bands which are acting in inaccessible places are in sore need of assistance'<sup>125</sup>.*

When, on the same day (18 May), the Russian ambassador in London represented to British Foreign Secretary Grey that, in order to satisfy Armenian opinion in Russia, his Government were anxious to make a public declaration, warning Turkey about the treatment of the Ottoman Armenians, Grey informed the Russian Foreign Minister that he concurred in such a declaration, and that he was prepared to publish it in London as soon as the French Government agreed to do likewise<sup>126</sup>. As a result of this communication, the Entente Powers warned the Ottoman Government on 24 May, through the Havas Agency, that they would hold it responsible for the so-called 'Armenian massacres'.

The Ottoman Government, in reply, denied these allegations, and declared that the Armenians were actually provoked to rebellion by the Entente Powers, particularly by Russia and Britain. The Ottoman Government had only quelled the Armeian rebellion without any massacres. While the British and the French navy commanders were bombarding the hospitals at Gallipoli, and the Russian Government was provoking the Armenians to massacre the law-abiding Muslims in the Kars Province, and exterminating the Turkish prisoners of war in the Caucasus, 'is it not strange for the Governments of Russia, Britain and France to talk about humanity?' it asked, and went on: 'Britain, France and Russia have not

<sup>125</sup> FO 371/2489/82061: Sir H. O. Bax-Ironside to Grey, dispatch no. 35, Sofia, 18.5.1915.

<sup>126</sup> FO 371/2488/59097: Foreign Office to Bertie, cipher telegram no. 1235, London, 18.5.1915.



only organised the Armenian rebellion in Turkey, they also tried to provoke the Muslims to rise in rebellion against the Ottoman Sultanate. Those responsible for the incidents are the Entente Powers' <sup>127</sup>.

Thus, the removal of the Armenians from certain regions to others was a measure dictated by imperative military necessity. It must be realised that Turkey, at the time, was locked in a life-and-death struggle with her external enemies, and the relocations were dictated by the security needs of the state. The Ottoman Government had reason to distrust many of the Armenians of Anatolia, as the U. S. Government, with much less justification, could not trust Americans of Japanese ancestry in World War II, and had them interned. Moreover, the assistance given by the Armenians to the invading Russian armies in 1828, 1854, and 1877 was not forgotten <sup>128</sup>. This was now being repeated. Hence, the whole affair was spontaneous and the result of extreme provocation and disloyalty by the Armenian insurgents <sup>129</sup>.

Out of about 800,000 Armenians who were relocated until the end of the war, some lives were lost as a result of large-scale military and guerrilla activities then going on in the areas through which they passed, as well as the general insecurity and blood-feuds which some tribal forces sought to carry out as the convoys passed through their territories. In addition, the relocation and resettlement of the Armenians took place at a time when the Ottoman Empire was suffering from severe shortages of fuel, food, medicine, and other supplies as well as from large-scale plague and famine. A number of Armenians also died because of disease, climatic conditions, difficulties of travel, illegal actions of some guards, and as a result of Armenian rebellions during fights in revolts. But many more Muslims from eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus became refugees and lost their lives because of similar circumstances, including massacres by Armenians <sup>130</sup>. This is also admitted by Boghos Noubar, president of the Armenian National Delegation, who declared in January 1919:

*'...Although the losses of the Armenians are very great, those of the Turks in the course of the war have not been less. A German re-*

<sup>127</sup> Parmaksızoğlu, op. cit., pp. 116-20; Trumpener, p. 210; see also *Papers relating to the foreign relations of United States*, 1915, supplement, p. 981.

<sup>128</sup> McCarthy 'Armenian terrorism' in *International Terrorism...*, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>129</sup> Sonyel: *Impact International*, 28 October to 10 November 1983, p. 6.

<sup>130</sup> Shaw and Shaw, II, pp. 315-6.

*port gives 2,500,000 as the total losses of the Turks by war, epidemic and famine which have caused terrible havoc owing to improvidence and shortage of hospital personnel and medicines. At least half of these losses have been sustained by the population of the Armenian provinces... which have been invaded both by the Russian and Armenian armies...'*<sup>131</sup>

Entente and Armenian propaganda, however, magnified the Armenian losses and ignored the Muslim victims.

It must be stressed that, in February 1919, the Ottoman Government, through its Foreign Minister, handed five telegrams to the British high commissioner for transmission to the Turkish representatives in Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, asking them to invite the Governments to which they were accredited to appoint two members each to sit on a commission of inquiry it had set up in order to find those responsible for the relocation of Muslim and non-Muslim Ottoman citizens, if any, and for any other war crimes. The Entente Powers, however, mainly Britain, blocked the way of such a commission, as it was not the intention of the British Government to encourage neutrals to take part on such a Turkish commission<sup>132</sup>, probably because its findings would have been contrary to the interests of the Great Powers, who were themselves mainly responsible for the Turco-Armenian conflict. Nor could the British find any evidence to try the many Ottoman statesmen and officials they had arrested in connection with the Turco-Armenian incidents, during their occupation of Turkey at the end of the Great War, whom they had deported to, and incarcerated in, Malta<sup>133</sup>. Ultimately they had to release all of them.

Following the enactment of the Law of Relocations Armenian insurrection continued. There were rebellions at Boğazlayan on 23 July 1915, at Findıcık (Maraş) on 1 August, at the Görmüş village of Urfa on 9 August, at Musa Dağı (Antakya) on 14 September, at Urfa on 29 September, at İslahiye on 7 February 1916, at Akdağ Madeni on 4 April 1916, at Tos-

<sup>131</sup> FO 371/4376/PID 206: Paris Peace Conference, 25.2.1919; see also Hovannisian: 'The ebb and flow of the Armenian minority in the Arab Middle East', *Middle East Journal*, No. 28, 1974, p. 20, and his *Republic of Armenia*, I, p. 126.

<sup>132</sup> FO 371/4173/47293: Webb to Balfour, 25.2.1919; Foreign Office to Webb, 2.4.1919.

<sup>133</sup> FO 371/5090/E 9934; CP (Confidential Print) No. 1770; FO 371/6502/E 5845.

yan on 9 April 1916, and in many other places<sup>134</sup>. Early in July 1915 Ottoman reinforcements pushed the Russo-Armenian army back. It was accompanied by thousands of Armenians who feared punishment for their atrocities in the short-lived Van state. Fleeing behind the retreating Russian forces, nearly 240,000 Armenians made for the Caucasus, 40,000 of whom perished during the flight. Those who died did so while accompanying the retreating Russian army, and not as a result of direct Ottoman attempts to kill them<sup>135</sup>.

While the Armenians' rebellion continued, their extremist leaders abroad were still trying to procure intervention. On 15 July Boghos Noubar wrote to Sir Arthur Nicolson of the British Foreign Office, enclosing a memorandum from Kevork V, the Catholicos of the Armenians, on Armenian aspirations. The *desiderata* of the Armenians, as summarised in this memorandum, entailed an 'autonomous and neutralised' Armenia composed of the six eastern provinces of Turkey and Cilicia, and possessing a '*statut*' formed on the reform scheme of 1913. A commercial outlet via Mersin was also expected, and Boghos Noubar expatiated on the economic and political advantages which this would mean to the Allies - especially to Britain, who would thereby secure a neutralised terminus for her overland route to India. The chief point, however, was Noubar's insistence that this future 'Armenia' should be under the protection, not of Russia alone, but of all the three Allied Powers<sup>136</sup>.

Meanwhile, in Cairo, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes had a meeting with Sourene Bartevean, the Dashnakist editor of the Armenian newspaper *Houssaper*, who revealed to him what Sykes believed to be the intentions and aspirations of his party. Bartevean had a high position of an occult kind in the organisation to which he belonged. He spoke somewhat slightly of Boghos Noubar, as a person who had only lately taken an interest in Armenian affairs, but owing to his rank and position, the Dashnak party had decided 'to use him as an instrument'. Bartevean said that the Dashnakists would stand out for autonomy under international

<sup>134</sup> Gürün, p. 211; see also FO 371/2488/143153: Stevens to Foreign Office, Batum dispatch, 16.9.1915; *Kavkazske Slovo*, 15.9.1915.

<sup>135</sup> Bayur in *Bellesten* no. 117, pp. 30-4; Sabis II, pp. 185-96; Hovannisian: *Road to Independence*, pp. 53-8; Trumpener, pp. 204-33; Shaw and Shaw II, p. 316.

<sup>136</sup> FO 371/2488/96760: Boghos Noubar to Sir Arthur Nicolson, London letter, 15.7.1915, enclosing 'Note sur la Question Armenienne par le Representant de sa Saintete Kevork V Catholicos de tous les Armenians', London 13.7.1915.

protection, but that they would be prepared to accept the suzerainty of Russia. He was very decided on the question of the division of 'Armenia', and made it quite clear that no partition of 'greater or lesser Armenia' would be accepted. He told Sykes that, from the private advices he had received, no Muslims survived in the city of Van, that the district was rapidly filling with refugees from the Caucasus, and that the Armenians hoped soon to be in possession of Muş. As regards the limits of 'Armenia', he agreed that the 'six *vilâyet*s' was only a vague term, and that their boundaries were not satisfactory enough to form the basis of an autonomous vassal state. He was doubtful as to the inclusion of Sivas, Diyarbakır and Kayseri, but considered Erzurum and Erzincan essential<sup>137</sup>.

Two days later (on 16 July), Mark Sykes wrote to Major-General C. E. Calwell secretly that the Dashnak Society would be prepared to consider the feasibility of the raising of a force of 5,000 to 6,000 men, from among the Armenians in the U. S. A., for use in the Zeytun district, provided that the Entente Powers would assist in transporting this force to the scene of operations and further covering its landing. He said that, as the Turks were already taking the most violent measures possible against the Armenians in the area mentioned, the objection that such action would only bring misery on the Armenians could no longer be upheld. Boghos Noubar Pasha would probably advance some such scheme in the course of his forthcoming mission to Paris<sup>138</sup>.

On 22 July a delegation for the Committee of Armenian National Defence of Cairo asked Lieutenant-General Sir John Maxwell to help their compatriots in Asia Minor. They stated that a volunteer movement, under the direction of the revolutionary committee, was in progress among the Armenian colonies in America and elsewhere, and requested permission to concentrate a force in Cyprus, which could make landings at Mersin and Beylan. By seizing the Cilician Gates and the Beylan Pass, they claimed that they would paralyze all Turkish movement in Asia Minor. As there were more Armenians than Turks at Alexandretta, they claimed, and Hacin on the Anti-Taurus was entirely Armenian, they contended that, once they had successfully landed an armed force from Cyp-

<sup>137</sup> FO 371/2490/108253: War Office to Foreign Office, dispatch B. 20/1/130 (M.O.2), Whitehall, 6.8.1915; Major-General Calwell, enclosing letters from Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes to Major-General C. E. Calwell, Cairo, 14.7.1915.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.: Sykes to Calwell, secret dispatch no. 15, Cairo, 16.7.1915.

rus, they would have no difficulty in holding the Taurus, the Anti-Taurus, and the Amanus mountains against the Turks, especially at a time when the latter were fully occupied with the Russians on the Caucasus, and the Anglo-French in Gallipoli.

The Committee were certain to concentrate 10,000 men, in addition to the Armenians in Asia Minor. Their compatriots, they believed, would flock from Russia, Greece, Armenia, Bulgaria, and even America; but they needed the good-will of the British Government, any arms that could be spared, and permission to assemble in Cyprus when they would ask for assistance in transport and, perhaps, a small allied force. Sir John Maxwell did not hold out any prospect of their proposal being accepted, but promised to forward it to the proper quarter<sup>139</sup>.

On 25 July three Armenians, who claimed to be the chiefs of the Hintchak revolutionary society, arrived at Christiania in Norway. They had regular Russian passports, and the British ambassador there, M. Findley, had ascertained that they had been in communication with the Russian Foreign Minister. They said that they were organising an insurrection in Zeytun, and were going to America to make arrangements. Findley suggested to the Foreign Office that the Armenian insurrection would probably lead to nothing but massacres, and that it might be dangerous and inadmissible to have anything to do with these people. The Foreign Office agreed with him, and instructed him in no way to encourage the proposal, or to give any assistance<sup>140</sup>.

On 2 August Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Mark Sykes saw M. Malezian, the secretary of Boghos Noubar, and M. Damadian, a Hintchakist leader, in Cairo, and found out that the plan favoured by the Egyptian Armenians was as follows: that a force of about 5,000 Armenians should be concentrated in Cyprus, and there armed and organised at the expense of the Allies for a descent on the north Syrian coast. The force would consist of about 1,500 men, who had served in the Bulgarian or Turkish armies. The remainder would be men of little military experience, who were labourers in the U. S. A. The plan of campaign would roughly be to land a detached force of about 800, who would seize Süveydiye (Suedia) and foment disorder in a radius of about twenty miles around that place. The re-

<sup>139</sup> FO 371/2485/106796: McMahon to Grey, Ramleh, 27.7.1915.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, document no. 101144: Findley to Grey, 25.7.1915.

mainer would break up into small bands of fifty to sixty, and landing at points between Ayas and Piyas, try to work northward towards Elbistan, and there operate as *komitadjis* (guerrillas) on Macedonian lines. The preliminary organisation of this force would take about eight weeks. Thus, if the Allies approved the scheme on or about 15 August, operations would begin about 15 October. This would give the bands about three weeks to work up into the mountains before the snows began; after snow had fallen, the pursuit and tracking down of small groups would become almost impossible. The Armenians only required from the Allies arms, munitions, transport and a covering of their landing, after which they would rely entirely on themselves.

Sykes thought that the formation of this force, and its concentration in Cyprus, would be profitable, even if it was never landed in Asia Minor, as rumours and reports of its existence would always cause the enemy uneasiness, and it might be used as a feint to conceal other operations. It would also be a useful weapon in the event of Istanbul falling, about the middle of October (1915). In such an event, it might be advisable to cut off the Turkish forces in Asia Minor from Syria and Irak. Once winter had come, the only road to either region for any considerable reinforcements lay through the Cilician Gates, and over the Amanus. In this case, 5,000 Armenians might prove of value as an adjunct to a force from the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. In order to seize the Adana plain and its entrance on the north and east, however, French approval was essential, and if the suggestion was considered, the army of occupation of Adana and its plain might be the French contingent then at the Dardanelles. An early decision was needed as the Armenians were getting very excited and restless, and unless they were given something to do, would fall out among themselves and add to the subsequent difficulties of the final settlement in Turkey. But the Army Council would not encourage an 'irregular rising in Cilicia'<sup>141</sup>.

In the middle of August, the Turkish Embassy in Gulahak (Persia) issued a statement about the removal of the Armenians from the Turco-Russian frontier, and explained the reasons for such action and for the various Turco-Armenian incidents. It pointed out that the action of the Turkish Government had been misinterpreted in neutral countries by the

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., document nos. 113481 and 115866: Sykes to Maxwell, 3.8.1915; War Office to Foreign Office, 15.8.1915.

enemies of Turkey who tried to prove the innocence of the Armenians. The latter, from the beginning, had helped the Russians in their plans, and recently attacked and burned the village of Kara Hisar, inhabited by Muslims. In order to put a stop to the Armenian agitation without bloodshed, the Ottoman Government had been obliged to remove the frontier Armenians into the interior of the country, concluded the statement, which was minuted by Lancelot Oliphant of the British Foreign Office as follows: 'Mr. Marling informs me privately that rumours of events at Kara Hissar are very ugly'<sup>142</sup>.

The Turkish statement was an attempt to minimise, or neutralise, the Anglo-Armenian propaganda drive directed towards the then neutral countries such as Italy, the U. S. A., Greece, Roumania, and Bulgaria. We learn from a dispatch which Sir Henry McMahon sent to Sir Edward Grey on 26 August that, through the medium of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch in Egypt, McMahon had received, for communication to the British Government, the translation of a letter, dated 13 July and addressed by an Armenian of Istanbul to the Archbishop of the Armenians in Philippopolis (Dedeağaç), in Bulgaria. (Bulgaria did not enter the war until 14 October 1915 - and unfortunately for the Entente-Armenian conspirators - on the side of the Central Powers). The letter was believed to represent 'the awful situation' in the eastern provinces of Turkey as known at that date in Armenian 'official' sources in Istanbul. But McMahon could not guarantee the accuracy of the facts related. The Patriarch had sent telegrams to the sovereigns of Italy, Greece, Roumania and Bulgaria (none of which countries was in the war at the time), calling attention to the Turkish policy of relocations that was being carried out. (One wonders why he did not send telegrams to other really neutral Powers such as Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, etc). Thereupon, British parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Robert Cecil, thought that the letter of 13 July to Archbishop Tourian should be made known to the American press. 'As we cannot vouch for all the particulars given, I am a little chary of giving it officially to the Americans here, but perhaps you could arrange to put it into the right hands', he advised Maier in Washington<sup>143</sup>.

<sup>142</sup> FO 371/2488/127223: Marling to Grey, Gulahak (Persia) dispatch no. 108, 13.8.1915.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, document no. 125295: McMahon to Grey, Ramleh dipatch no. 96, 16.8.1915; Foreign Office to Maier, 14.9.1915.

On 25 August Captain Torkom, a Bulgarian officer of Armenian origin who had been serving with the Russian Army, called on George W. Buchanan, the British ambassador at Petrograd, and submitted a scheme for the organisation of Armenian volunteers for service at the Dardanelles against Turkey. Buchanan did not encourage him, but nevertheless promised to send his scheme to London. It was a thirteen-page plan of recruitment and training of Armenian volunteers, which, to Sir H. E. Nicolson seemed 'hardly more practicable than the many other irresponsible offers that have reached us'<sup>144</sup>. Four days later, M. Sabine of the Russian Embassy in London submitted the same scheme on behalf of Torkom, but Lancelot Oliphant, who informed the Director of Military Operations about this, notified the British military attaché at Petrograd of the Army Council's decision to refuse the scheme, in case he was approached by Torkom himself<sup>145</sup>.

In the middle of September, British Consul P. Stevens reported from Batum that, according to the *Kavkazskoe Slovo* newspaper of 2/15 September: 'Refugees who have arrived at Soukhoun from Turkey state that a considerable number of armed young Armenians have raised the standard of insurrection in the mountains of Shan. The Laz leader Ismail Beg is assisting them, and has joined the rebels with his men for combined action against the Turkish Government'<sup>146</sup>.

On 24 September Sir Henry McMahon wrote to the Foreign Office, referring to the suspension of the Dardanelles campaign during the winter, and suggested 'the sudden and entirely unexpected descent' upon Alexandretta, which appeared 'the most suitable operation'. From Alexandretta, he believed, a force would seize, or threaten, the only line of communication, not only with Syria, but with Baghdad, and even the Caucasus, if the Black Sea route was closed. Successful operations in this direction would completely isolate the enemy forces in Mesopotamia and Arabia, and also in Syria, 'a country containing many elements hostile to Turkish rule', and well disposed towards the Allies. The 'much desired support and encouragement' would be given to those Armenians in the

<sup>144</sup> FO 371/2485/126836: Buchanan to Grey, dispatch no. 120, Petrograd, 26.8.1915.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, document no. 122136: M. Sabine, Russian Embassy, to Foreign Office, London, 29.8.1915.

<sup>146</sup> FO 371/2488/143153: Stevens to Foreign Office, dispatch no. 38, Batum, 16.9.1915.



neighbourhood, 'who are already in revolt against the Turks', he remarked. This idea was supported by Lord Kitchener also<sup>147</sup>, but apparently nothing came out of it.

### BRITISH PROPAGANDA: THE BLUE BOOK OF 1916 ABOUT THE TURCO-ARMENIAN INCIDENTS

On 2 October 1915 Lord Cromer wrote to Lord Crewe of the Foreign Office, sending him a copy of a question which he had put down to ask in the House of Lords the following Wednesday. He offered to withdraw the question if it would cause any embarrassment, but he did not think that this was likely to be the case.

*'I may mention', he went on, 'that I think it very desirable at present to give the utmost publicity to the Turkish proceedings, with a view to letting the educated Mahommedans in India know what is the nature of the Turkish Government, and so bring home to their minds that it would be a great mistake in any way to identify the cause of Islam with that of Turkey'*<sup>148</sup>.

Lord Cromer was thus indirectly suggesting that the British Government should indulge in a propaganda campaign in the U. S. A., by making use of the Turco-Armenian incidents. In fact, four days later he declared in the House of Lords that Lord Bryce had given 'a horrible picture' of the incidents in Anatolia involving the Armenians, basing them on accounts by missionaries and Armenian sources. Lord Cromer also suggested ignorantly, or perhaps deliberately, that there had been no rising in Anatolia on the part of the Armenians<sup>149</sup>.

Early in October the press stated that the U. S. Government had addressed a strong protest to the Turkish Government through the U. S. ambassador at Istanbul, 'on the grounds of humanity'. Some time earlier the German ambassador had communicated to the U. S. Government a report from the German consul at Trabzon justifying the Turkish mea-

<sup>147</sup> FO 371/2480/138051: McMahon to Foreign Office, cipher telegram, Alexandria, 24.9.1915; *ibid.* document no. 170824: cipher secret telegram from Mudros, 11.11.1915.

<sup>148</sup> FO 371/2488/143621: Lord Cromer to Lord Crewe, London letter, 2.10.1915.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, document no. 14883: Parliamentary Question by the Earl of Cromer, 6.10.1915.

tures on grounds of Armenian agitation<sup>150</sup>. But the British were eager to exploit the Turco-Armenian incidents for propaganda purposes, and in fact, the British ambassador in Washington, Spring-Rice, had already begun to spread the news of the so-called 'Armenian massacres' through the press<sup>151</sup>. The British even began to hunt for photographs of 'Armenian atrocities', or Armenian refugees, which might be made good use of in America<sup>152</sup>. Failing to procure such photographs, they approached Lord Bryce, who promised to do what he could in the matter. But Lord Bryce, too, could not find any photographs despite the help of his Armenian friends<sup>153</sup>.

When, on 6 October, the British representative at the Vatican, M. Gregory, apprised the Foreign Office about the Pope having made personal representation to the Sultan on the subject of the Turco-Armenian incidents, the Foreign Office informed Gregory that they could suggest no action for the Pope to take except a public expression of his views.

*'You may, of course, if you consider it advisable, give the most formal assurances on behalf of His Majesty's Government that they have never provoked nor encouraged any Armenian rising against the Turks, and that all statements to that effect, which have been made by our enemies, are devoid of all foundation',* declared the Foreign Office.

This correspondence prompted Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey to ask, in a minute, 'Have we ever contradicted the allegation that we had stirred up a rebellion in Armenia?' (News Department: I think so). 'We cannot suggest how the Pope's influence can be used - should it be by public expression of disapproval. *If we have not supplied arms to the Armenians, or stirred up insurrection* - my recollection is that we always refused to do this, hence we would not support them - the charge should be contradicted by the News Department'. Harold Nicolson added: 'A denial was issued through Reuters and sent to neutral countries, including America, and the story was also denied through individual American correspondents'<sup>154</sup>.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., document no. 145049: Spring-Rice to Grey, cipher telegram no. 1988, Washington, 5.10.1915.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., document no. 153862: Spring-Rice to Grey, dispatch no. 599, Washington, 8.10.1915.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., document no. 148680: Foreign Office to Buchanan, cipher telegram no. 2361, 11.10.1915.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., document no. 153610: Foreign Office to Philip Patchin, 18.10.1915.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., document no. 152040: Gregory to Foreign Office, cipher telegram no. 76, Vatican, 16.10.1915; Foreign Office to Gregory, cipher telegram no. 53 (R), 21.10.1915.

Thus, the British Foreign Secretary himself was not sure whether the British had supplied arms to the Armenians, or stirred up insurrection, but in the light of past deeds and the documents referred to above, it would have been very difficult for a conscientious and honest person to have made such remarks; although many British documents dealing with such an explosive issue are lacking, having been conveniently withdrawn or destroyed. Paradoxically, a secret telegram which the Viceroy of India sent to the India Office on 27 October 1915 does not refer to any 'mass-acres'. The telegram was as follows:

*'1,500 Armenian women and children recently arrived at Mosul from Van and are said to have been given subsistence allowance of two annas per diem by the Turkish Government. Armenians have been deported from Bagdad to Deir-ez-Zor by Nuruddin (Nurettin). The general policy seems to be to exile the Armenians to places as far removed as possible from any of the theatres of war and so prevent their aiding the Allies by revolution or leakage of intelligence. To this end they move them eastwards from the Aleppo area and northwards from Bagdad...'*<sup>155</sup>.

In view of the Anglo-Armenian propaganda then going on, on 13 October, M. Rifat, the editor of *La Patrie Egyptienne*, issued a statement to the Danish press in which he declared that England was responsible for the severe reprisals against the insurgent Armenians. That country had been organising a conspiracy among the Armenians throughout Turkey; a rebellion was to break out in Istanbul and the rest of Turkey as soon as the Allies got through the Dardanelles. Inquiry had brought to light numerous documents showing that a great rising was planned. The insurrection broke out prematurely in the provinces where the Armenians fell upon the Muslim towns and massacred the inhabitants. The ring-leaders were arrested, and vast stores of munitions of war were discovered. Documents found in the possession of the leaders of the movement clearly established British complicity. Turkey merely acted in self defence in crushing the widespread plot which threatened the existence of the Empire. The Turkish Government was prepared to produce all the documents discovered. But at the British Foreign Office, Rifat was regarded as a 'notorious agitator'. 'It might be as well to refute', suggested G. T. Clerk; how-

<sup>155</sup> FO 371/2491/168133: Viceroy to India Office, secret telegram, 27.10.1815.

ever, in the light of British, French, Russian, and Armenian collaboration, no such refutation was issued<sup>156</sup>.

Four months later (in February 1916) the Turkish Government published its first official defence against the charges connected with the Armenian relocations. In a statement, it lay the blame for the resulting bloodshed on the Armenian revolutionaries who had caused uprisings among the Ottoman Armenians. It stated that the disturbances were provoked by the British, French, and Russian Governments. Turkish troops had been betrayed when the Russian offensive had begun. The statement declared:

*'It is true that, in the course of the passage of the Armenians from one locality to another, certain deplorable excesses took place. But which nation in the world can throw a stone at Turkey because the Mussulman population - exasperated by the culmination of Armenian hostility, insurrection and massacre at the time when the empire was engaged in war in defence of its very existence - at last took the law into its own hands and retaliated upon the traitors in their own coin? How could the imperial authorities immediately everywhere prevent these not unnatural outbreaks when their primary duty to the State was to employ all its resources in the defence of the country on three fronts against four great Powers?'*

The statement went on to explain that Government was not inactive in respect of the protection of the lives and property of the Armenians. Stringent instructions were issued, and a battalion of gendarmerie was entrusted with the task of conveying the relocated Armenians, which resisted an attempt made by the local Muslims to exercise vengeance upon them, and lost a considerable number of men in so doing. The Government set up commissions to deal fairly with Armenian properties, and bring to justice those who committed excesses. It then emphasised:

*'The removal of the Armenians from certain regions to others was a measure dictated by imperative military necessity. No coercive measures were taken by the imperial Government against the Armenians until June 1915, by which time they had risen in arms at Van and in*

<sup>156</sup> FO 371/2488/149875: Lowther to Grey, 13.10.1915.

*other military zones. This was after they had joined hands with the enemy*<sup>157</sup>.

When the British ambassador in Washington, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, informed Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, in February 1916, about the formal protest made by the U. S. Government to the Ottoman Government against the continuation of the 'atrocities', Lancelot Oliphant of the Foreign Office commented: 'I suppose we are already making use of the Armenian question for *propaganda* in the U. S.' 'Mr. Hurst is even now writing up the Armenian question, and his article will certainly teach the U. S. A.', rejoined another official<sup>158</sup>.

All this time the British Intelligence and Information Services, some political and military advisers, and Armenophil and Turcophobe enthusiasts such as Lord Bryce, Arnold Toynbee, Aneurin Williams, and others, were urging the British Government to publicise the so-called 'Armenian massacres'. Internally, it was hoped that this would arouse, among the British public, more interest in 'the little Allies of the Entente', the Armenians, and hatred towards the Turks; whilst, externally, it would divert the international attention from the atrocious persecution of the Jews by Britain's close ally Russia, which had intensified during the war, and also, it would stimulate the neutral countries with pro-Entente tendencies, such as the U. S. A., Greece, and the Hashemite Arabs, to join the fray on the side of the Allies.

The task of collecting the material<sup>159</sup>, mainly from Armenian sources, and of writing a report, which would later be published under the title: *The treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-16*, was undertaken by the well-known Armenophil Viscount Bryce, and Arnold Toynbee. Bryce wrote to Grey on 1 July 1916 that, 'in the interest of historic truth', he found it necessary 'to compile a general narrative of the events, and estimate their significance'. When responses from various, mainly Armenian, quarters showed that sufficient materials for a 'history - provisional no doubt, but *trustworthy* as far as the present date went - could be ob-

<sup>157</sup> FO 371/2768/39517: *Sun*, New York, 16.2.1916.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, document no. 45923: Spring-Rice to Grey, 26.2.1916.

<sup>159</sup> On how the propaganda material was collected and utilised, see Arthur Ponsonby: *Falsehood in Wartime*, New York 1971; Cate Haste: *Keep the home fires burning*, London 1977; and Michael Sanders and Philip M. Taylor: *British propaganda during the First World War, 1914-1918*, London 1983.

tained', he claimed, he secured the cooperation of 'a young historian of high academic distinction', Arnold J. Toynbee, the former Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.

Viscount Grey replied on 23 August, referring to the report as 'a terrible mass of evidence', which ought to be published and widely studied by all who had the broad interests of humanity at heart. He claimed that it would be valuable, not only *for the immediate information of public opinion* as to the conduct of the Turkish Government towards the 'defenceless' Armenians, but also as 'a mine of information for historians in the future', and for other purposes, which he did not specify<sup>160</sup>.

In fact, the Blue Book, as it came to be called, on the so-called 'Armenian massacres', turned out to be one of the most successful wartime propaganda exercises of the British Government, which used it in inculcating hatred towards, and denigrating, its enemies, the Turks, before world opinion, in rewarding its Armenian allies with sympathy, flattery and false promises, and in effecting the great coup of finally winning over the wavering pro-Entente neutrals - the Hashemite Arabs, the U. S. A., and Greece.

Of the two protagonists who championed the cause of Anglo-Armenian propaganda, Viscount Bryce was a conceited Turcophobe who had been inciting the Armenian extremists to rebellion since the publication of his book entitled *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, in 1877, in which he remarked: 'Why... do the Armenians not rise in rebellion against these outrages (Turco-Armenian incidents), as their forefathers did against the Seleucids or the Parthians?'<sup>161</sup> He was also a naive man who had been easily taken in by the skilful and deceitful Armenian propagandists. For example, when an incident took place in August 1889 at Blaidar, in the Bisheri sub-district of eastern Anatolia, in which seven Armenians were murdered and fifty houses were burnt down, Bryce put the blame on Muslim tribesmen. In fact, the British consular agent, Thomas Boyadjian, who was himself an Armenian, had reported that the incident was caused by a long-standing antagonism between the two Armenian chiefs of the village, one of whom had become Roman Catholic and decided to have the family of the other exterminated<sup>162</sup>.

<sup>160</sup> Lord Bryce and Arnold J. Toynbee: *Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire* (Blue Book), 1916, pp. XVI-XVIII.

<sup>161</sup> James Bryce: *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, 1896, p. 344.

<sup>162</sup> Accounts and Papers, 5376, XCVI, Turkey No. 1 (1890-91), C. 6214: Boyadjian to Chermside, 10.8.1889.

Bryce himself called at the Foreign Office early in March 1915 with the suggestion that Russia should be approached to announce that she would be prepared to agree to an autonomous Armenia being eventually instituted under Russian protection. Such a declaration would please the Armenians, Bryce believed, and stimulate them to afford assistance to the Allies in conflict with Turkey<sup>163</sup>. In April, Bryce was also encouraging the Armenians to rise against the Turks in Cilicia<sup>164</sup>.

As for Arnold J. Toynbee, he has been described by Gordon Martel as a 'propagandist'. As early as June 1912 Toynbee wrote to his mother that he was anxious to see the Turks driven out of Europe, not because they were 'brutal oppressors', but because they were 'stupid and lazy'. He proposed to replace them with a regime that would be 'vigorous and brutal'<sup>165</sup>. The decision of the Ottoman Empire to join forces with the Central Powers would make a stiffer job of the war, he believed, 'but it will be a simplification in the end; we shan't leave any bits of Turkey lying about, when we clear up the mess afterwards'<sup>166</sup>.

According to Gordon Martel, many men thought that they would discover their true selves under fire on the battlefield; Toynbee resigned himself to discovering what he could by working as a '*propagandist*'. In May 1915, he went to London for the duration of the war to work in the newly-formed department of information (propaganda), located at Wellington House. For almost two years he devoted his considerable energies to writing books and articles such as *The German terror in Belgium*, *The German terror in France*, *The Armenian atrocities*, and *The death of Nurse Cavell*. Toynbee, 'the distinguished historian and member of Wellington House', we are told by Sanders and Taylor, 'became something of a specialist in "atrocious propaganda"'<sup>167</sup>.

Apparently the first text of the Blue Book on the Armenians was the pamphlet entitled *Armenian atrocities, the murder of a nation*, by Toynbee, published in 1915 by the Masterman Bureau. In the book, references

<sup>163</sup> FO 371/2485/30439: Minute by Sir A. Nicolson, 9.3.1915.

<sup>164</sup> CO 67/178/20859: Law to Colonial Office, 4.5.1915, enclosing Bryce to Foreign Office, 26.4.1915.

<sup>165</sup> Toynbee to his mother, 22.6.1912, quoted by Gordon Martel: 'The origin of the Chatham House version', in Edward Ingram (ed.): *National and international politics in the Middle East*, London 1986, p. 71.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71: Toynbee to his mother, 31.10.1914.

<sup>167</sup> Sanders and Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

were given to items published in the Armenian newspapers *Horizon* of Tiflis, the *Ararat* of London, the *Gotchnag* of New York, and to the Armenian Atrocities Committee in the U. S. A. which reported the information it had gathered from missionaries and Armenians. The Blue Book itself was published after this.

From February 1916 onwards Toynbee, on instructions from Bryce, began to collect information against Turkey from various countries and individuals as well as from Armenian committees<sup>168</sup>. These items of information were sent to him without much detail on their sources. In fact, Toynbee wrote to Lord Bryce on 11 May 1916 as follows:

*'Mr. Gowers from our office discussed with Montgomery from the Foreign Office how to publish the Armenian documents. They (the Foreign Office) claim that if you were to send these documents with an introductory note to Sir Edward Grey (Foreign Secretary) and state that they have been prepared under your supervision, that they are trustworthy, then your letter would be published by the Foreign Office as an official document, and the documents would constitute an appendix to your letter. The problem of publication would thus be solved. While giving the book an official character, it would free the Foreign Secretary from the obligation to take upon himself the probing of the accuracy of every matter mentioned in these documents.'*

Thus the Blue Book was prepared by Toynbee, a member of the Masterman propaganda bureau - by collecting together various documents without having thoroughly checked their accuracy, and gathered mainly from Armenian sources, or from people sympathetic to the Armenians, i.e. from second or third-hand sources, and was issued as an official publication in order to give it more authenticity and credibility<sup>169</sup>.

The work was completed in a short time, and definitely in less than a year. How authentic and reliable a work of 'historical scholarship' the Blue Book is, the scholars themselves must judge. Toynbee himself, at first, considered it as 'the biggest asset of His Majesty's Government to solve the Turkish problem in a radical manner, and to have it accepted by the public'<sup>170</sup>, but he must have had qualms about it as his later work

<sup>168</sup> FO 96/205: Toynbee Papers.

<sup>169</sup> Gürün, op. cit., pp. 42-3.

<sup>170</sup> FO 371/3404/162647, p. 2.



*The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*<sup>171</sup> testifies. According to Gordon Martel, it was not that Toynbee particularly enjoyed his work as a 'propagandist'; in fact, he found it rather distasteful - 'no job for a gentleman' - and was relieved when he moved on to proper intelligence work in 1917<sup>172</sup>.

Yet, the Blue Book, as a 'masterpiece' of British wartime propaganda, had a devastating effect. Its wicked influence is still being abused by Armenian extremists in perpetuating their hatred towards the Turks, and by certain pseudo-scholars. Its success lay in the fact that it was based on 'atrocities' stories. British propagandists loved 'atrocity stories', real, exaggerated, or even fabricated<sup>173</sup>; because they could flog them to journalists and correspondents, who would then flash them under banner headlines in their journals<sup>174</sup>. Arthur Ponsonby explains that 'the injection of the poison of hatred into men's minds by means of falsehood is a greater evil in wartime than the actual loss of life. The defilement of the human soul is worse than the destruction of the human body'<sup>175</sup>.

Perhaps the most notorious 'atrocity story' of the entire war was the case of the so-called 'corpse-conversion factory', where Germans were accused of boiling down bodies to make soap. The story was a complete fabrication - it was finally exposed in 1925 when it was discussed in the House of Commons<sup>176</sup>. Most, if not all, wartime 'atrocity stories' were fabricated, or exaggerated tremendously; so was the myth of 'the deliberate extermination of the Armenians in Turkey in 1915'.

After the war, reassurances failed to dispel the overall impression of Britain's wartime propaganda deriving from the German label of 'all-lies', and the abundance of crude 'atrocity stories' which circulated during the conflict. The ferocity of atrocity propaganda was most marked in the British press where much of it originated<sup>177</sup>. The exposure of wartime 'atrocity stories' after the war, notably by Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in War-*

<sup>171</sup> A. J. Toynbee: *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey*, London 1923.

<sup>172</sup> Martel in Ingram, op. cit., pp. 74-5.

<sup>173</sup> See E. Alexander Powell: *The struggle for power in Moslem Asia*, New York 1925, p. 30; and Lucy Masterman: *C. F. G. Masterman*, 1939, p. 298.

<sup>174</sup> See also Sydney Whitman: *Turkish Memories*, London 1914, pp. 120-21.

<sup>175</sup> Ponsonby, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>176</sup> *Hansard*, 5th session, vol. 188, 24.11.1925; see also Ponsonby, pp. 102-20, 'Kadaver', *The Nation*, 38, 1925, pp. 147-8.

<sup>177</sup> Sanders and Taylor, op. cit., p. 263.

time, served to further undermine the respectability of the wartime experiment. James Morgan Read observes: 'Lying is an act of conscious deception. Much of British atrocity propaganda was unconscious deception built upon erroneous reports and impressions'<sup>178</sup>, and it was the British Government itself which, between 1914 and 1918, had demonstrated to the world the enormous power of propaganda<sup>179</sup>. Perhaps the Nazis received their inspiration from that source.

As for the authenticity and validity of the Blue Book as a work of 'historical scholarship', one only needs to peruse the real works of scholarship published after the Great War, exploding many of the myths of British wartime propaganda; works such as Sir Campbell Stuart's *Secrets of Crewe House* (1920), Harold Lasswell's *Propaganda technique in the World War* (1927), Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in wartime* (1928), J. D. Squires' *British propaganda at home and in the U. S. A. from 1914 to 1917* (1935), George Bryntz's *Allied propaganda and the collapse of the German Empire in 1918* (1938), Lucy Masterman's *C. F. G. Masterman* (1939), H. C. Peterson's *Propaganda for war: the campaign against American neutrality, 1914-17* (1939), James Morgan Read's *Atrocity propaganda, 1914-19* (1941), Cate Harte's *Keep the home fires burning* (1977), and Michael L. Sanders and Philip M. Taylor's *British propaganda during the First World War, 1914-18* (1982).

## CONCLUSION

In the light of recent archival material, and many publications, it has now become more evident that, the extremist leaders and militants of the Armenian minority in the Ottoman Empire played an important role in attempts to dismember that Empire. Their aims and ambitions, if fully realised, would involve the dissolution and disappearance of the Empire, to be replaced by puppet states, subservient to their patrons, the Great Powers, although nowhere in the Anatolian provinces did the Armenians constitute more than fifteen per cent of the total population.

The Armenian extremists realised, at an early stage of their relationship with other militant groups, which relationship began after the 1880s and blossomed since the Balkan wars, that, in order to procure their demands, they had to cooperate with one another. They also had to colla-

<sup>178</sup> James Morgan Read: *Atrocity Propaganda, 1914-19*, Yale 1941, p. 187.

<sup>179</sup> Sanders and Taylor, p. 265.

borate with the forces of instability, both inside and outside the Empire, to act as instruments of those Powers that had a stake in the dissolution of the Empire, to benefit from any Ottoman crisis, or even provoke such crisis, with the hope that the powers would intervene on their behalf; and above all, to indulge in a propaganda campaign against Turkey and the Turkish nation. In this, they were believed and assisted by the Christian West, which was skilfully manipulated by the powerful, resourceful, and deceitful Anglo-Armenian propaganda organisations and organs all over the world, particularly in Europe and the U. S. A.<sup>180</sup> In the field of propaganda no one could surpass the Armenian extremists; in the sphere of wartime propaganda, particularly between 1914-18, the British were supreme<sup>181</sup>.

Moreover, the Ottoman Armenians, in later years, began to use their position as translators/interpreters in the embassies and consulates of the Great Powers, to convince those Powers of their stories, and to sway their relief workers, missionaries, and spiritual leaders, about the genuineness of their case. Many a time a gullible western journalist was trapped by their vociferations, and spread their tales. A number of European diplomats and travellers within the Ottoman dominions were lured by these people, who had the same religion like them, and who usually knew languages, and through them the tales were more widely spread<sup>182</sup>.

Because the Turks were inarticulate, had a sense of dignity, and preferred to suffer in silence rather than to vociferate, some of the extremist leaders of the Ottoman Armenians, and their champions, were left unchallenged to spread the wildest myths and message of hate about the Turks and other Muslims. When documentary evidence was needed to substantiate their allegations, they invented or forged them without any sense of responsibility or conscience. Their skill in inventing non-existent documents, and in a sense presenting the black as white, and in many cases getting away with it, is confirmed by numerous primary documents in the archives of many countries whose governments were often the target of such brain-washing<sup>183</sup>.

<sup>180</sup> See also Pierre Loti: *La mort de notre chere France en Orient*, Paris 1920, p. 30.

<sup>181</sup> Sanders and Taylor, p. 265.

<sup>182</sup> Gürün, pp. 36 f.; Powell, p. 30; Clair Price: *The rebirth of Turkey*, New York 1923, p. 189; Toynbee: *The Western Question...*, p. 80.

<sup>183</sup> See also Sonyel: 'How Armenian propaganda deceived the Christian World in connection with the deportations and "massacres"', *Bellefen*, XLI, no. 161, Ankara, January

By early 1913 the situation in Anatolia, as a result of Armenian extremist agitation and intrigue with Russia, Britain, France, and some of the other Powers, became so acute that, it was prophesied at the British Foreign Office that the break-up of the Turkish Empire, in Asia as well as in Europe, appeared to be imminent<sup>184</sup>. When the Empire got involved in the Great War, a number of Armenian subjects of the Sultan were persuaded to do intelligence work for the Entente Powers, and to undermine the Turkish war effort by covertly collaborating with the enemies of their country. They indulged in agitation, propaganda, espionage, revolutionary and terrorist activities, with some of their extremist leaders having pledged their services to the enemy. The archives of the belligerents, particularly the Public Record Office in London, and the Ottoman archives, are full of documents indicating the extent of the collaboration of many Ottoman Armenian extremists with those Powers that aimed at destroying the Ottoman Empire<sup>185</sup>.

It is abundantly clear, in the light of archival material, that the people of Anatolia, both Muslims and non-Muslims, became unwittingly, reluctantly, or voluntarily, the instruments and victims of the Great Powers that had only one main purpose: their own self-interest, as reflected in the secret agreements they contracted among themselves during the Great War<sup>186</sup> for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. In those agreements, as indeed in the Treaty of Lausanne<sup>187</sup> which wound up the Ottoman Empire, one searches in vain to find any mention of the promises those Powers made to the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire, including the Ottoman Armenians, in order to lure them into disloyalty against their own

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1977, pp. 157-75; Gwynne Dyer: 'Turkish "falsifiers" and Armenian "deceivers": historiography and the Armenian massacres', *Middle Eastern Studies*, XII, no. 1, January 1976, pp. 99-107; Harold Armstrong: *Turkey in travail*, pp. 168-9; Luke: *Cities and men*, II, p. 55; Graves: *Storm centres of the Middle East*, p. 323; Ryan: *The last of the Dragomans*, p. 128; Rawlinson: *Adventures in the Near East*, p. 307; Orel and Yuca: *The Talat Pasha telegrams*.

<sup>184</sup> FO 371/1783/19793: Lowther to Grey, confidential dispatch, Istanbul, 26.4.1913, and Foreign Office minutes.

<sup>185</sup> See note 183 above; see also Llewellyn Smith: *The Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor, 1919-1922*, p. 34; Parmaksızoğlu, p. 77; FO 371/3410/129455; FO 371/6575/E 5569; *Documents on Ottoman Armenians*, II, document no. 1901, p. 22; Gilbert: *Sir Horace Rumbold: portrait of a diplomat, 1869-1941*, p. 344.

<sup>186</sup> For the secret agreements see Sonyel: *Turkish Diplomacy*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 185 f.

country - promises which they forgot as soon as their own interests were secured<sup>188</sup>.

Neither Russia, Britain, and France, the chief protagonists, nor Greece, Italy, Germany, Austria, and the U. S. A., can absolve themselves from the responsibility of the great tragedy of the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and its people, to which, admittedly, various incompetent Ottoman Ministries must have also contributed. On the other hand, one must not forget the responsibility of many of the extremist, self-seeking, self-centred and foreign-inspired leaders of the Ottoman Christian communities, particularly of the Armenians, who allowed themselves, and influenced their people, to become instruments of the Great Powers, and thus contributed enormously to that tragedy.

<sup>188</sup> Sonyel: *Impact International*, 28 October to 10 November 1983, p. 5.

